

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 14.05



Hey Beat readers! Welcome to issue 14.05. We can't believe we are already into our fifth week of issues for 2009, damn! This issue, as in every issue we deliver to you, bombards you with a host of writings, from the simple two minute down and dirty piece, to the thoughtful knock out flow, that is sitting high in our POW (Piece Of The Week) section. The beauty of The Beat, you writers come in all shapes and sizes, and as most of you know, every single one of you can get published in this gem of a publication, if you simply take your thoughts/writing skills seriously for a few minutes in our workshops, or when you feel inspired to share with the world.

We are always impressed with you writers who step up each and every week with mad game. One unit that has truly staggered us with knock out pieces over the months is our friends in the max unit B8 of Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Every session we get full participation - readers, singers, thinkers and leaders putting their thoughts down on paper. Every week these writers show up in our POW section, which is so impressive! We can't say it enough - it amazes us to observe the respect by the young men for each other during the unit, and the buy-in to write; it's incredibly moving. We Beat facilitators always walk away impressed and empowered, when our session ends, making the drive home to San Francisco that much easier.

We must also commend the staff/counselors who have helped create such a positive environment on the unit, with a group of young men who come from all walks of life- various hoods, gangs, and crimes, yet they all get it to a point and show incredible maturity and respect, which then allows for more opportunity in the bigger picture and not just with The Beat Within. Mind you, this doesn't happen in every unit we visit - as much as we wish it would - and we visit plenty of facilities each week. We know the staff will be changing soon in B8, so we can only hope the new staff over time will follow the same program this current staff has been operating under. Thank you B8 staff for all the love and support of The Beat Within every Thursday night over the past year!

Another thing that is amazing is that at least half of these writers are looking at hard time, yet their attitudes are so positive and so focused. These writers also understand how important their stories are to The Beat Within, and that they are leaders/teachers in our publication. (These writers may never know or truly appreciate how moving it is for the editor responding to their pieces each week - truly something he looks forward to week after week.) These young writers should also understand that they have developed a following, and many of you readers, believe it or not, are looking to them for understanding of what lies ahead and how they can improve their own lives hopefully before they find themselves in such a predicament - fighting for their lives in a max unit.

This editor can't stress enough how special this is for us Beat facilitators to work with such a great collection of writers. It has been almost ten years since B8 has been producing a host of stellar writers; we have to go back to the days of Dat Nguyen and Dwayne the Knowledge. When these two writers, both currently in prison, enticed the whole unit to get involved, and

that they did. Another reason for our success was the staff at that time, which was led by the one and only, Mr. Sam Crockett - who was a great-great Beat friend. And here we are in 2009, recognizing the special environment we currently have in B8, just like years past.

You know we are cherishing this moment, 'cause we know how fast things change. Young men move on in the system, staff changes, new energy joins the unit, and the whole unit changes for better or for worse, hopefully for better. Until that change happens, we'll embrace this moment, and hold onto it as a special Beat moment in time. Thank you all for believing.

The topics addressed in our workshops prior to the writing in this issue were:

"Bad influences" — We often read that you get into trouble for hanging out with "the wrong people." But have you ever been one of those "wrong people" that leads some other young person into trouble? Have you ever been a bad influence on someone else? What do you remember about that? If someone got into trouble because of your influence, how did it make you feel? Do you think it's all right to influence someone else in a negative way because you were influenced in a negative way? Think back, and tell us about a specific example of when you were a bad influence. Who did you influence? How did you do it? What were the consequences?

The second topic, 'The value of one life' - On New Year's Day, a young black man was killed by a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) policeman in Oakland, generating angry demonstrations in Oakland, San Francisco and elsewhere. But during 2008, every major city in this country saw many, many young people murdered (mostly by other young people). For example, there were 99 homicides in San Francisco, 123 in Oakland, and 186 in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Are some people's lives worth more (or less) than other people's lives? Is your life worth more than anyone else's? If so, what makes it worth more? Why do you think one murder leads to so much community anger, while so many others produce nothing more than a number to list in the end-of-the-year statistics in a newspaper or TV news report?

Third topic, "A brutally honest appraisal" - If your friends or family were willing to tell you honestly exactly what they think of you, listing all your faults as well as all your strengths, would you want them to? What do you think they would say?

Last topic, "One thing I've always wanted to do is..."

Oh, before we call it an Ed. Note, and although the Obama hysteria has died down, don't forget to take a stab at our writing essay contest, which is, "Does President Obama inspire you?" How does he inspire you? Send Beat editor Omar Turcios your thoughts on how President Barack Obama inspires you, and the top three pieces, voted on by the lead Beat editors, will be given \$50 money orders. The deadline for accepting pieces is February 28, 2009. All the pieces will be featured in The Beat Within publication the first week of March, 2009.

All right, this issue goes out to Peanutt, Temper, Saetern, Lil' G, Chango, Cash, and Moe Joe to name of few of these stellar writers who step up each and every week in their unit and deliver. Thank you all.

TABLE o f C O N T E N T S

THEBEATWITHIN.ORG VOLUME 14.05

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, Monterey, Fresno, Solano, Oak Hill - Washington DCSan Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/ Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillo County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SFCA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Somebody Please

Yeah, we gonna send this one out to all them enemigas out there. The fools that straight be smoking fools for no apparent reason, know what I mean. Yeah, time to get down.

My cells ringing off the hook about ten o'clock to break me off the news my lil' homie got shot. They said he got caught slipping in the 'hood. He caught three to the chest, and he wasn't doing good. He lasted eight hours till he passed on in the waiting room at General just before dawn. I'm feeling for his baby, his sister, and his mom. A son, a daddy, a soldier now gone. The homies got together and we feeling all this pain — the screaming, the crying, making us go insane. "An eye for an eye" is all that's on my mind and mercy is the last thing in my heart that I can find. Just thinking about god and the power and the will but forgive me, Lord, see now I must kill And when I catch 'em slipping the trigger I will squeeze bringing him to his knees

and yell...

"Somebody please...
Give me just a minute
to explain my misery"

I'm 17 now I'm trying to leave the game and banging ain't the same since the taste of fame I know that I should leave it in the hands of god but making them fools pay is my only job. They took my homie's life for all the wrong reasons. Now reasons for me is enemigas hunting season. Revenge is the only way to ease the pain I lost my little homie to the calles and all they got coming is puro desmadre. Remembering the days when it was all good, two lil' mocosos terrorizing the 'hood.

Epiphany

What that "B" like? Man, this ya boy L-Burna aka Money aka Low-Low. I'm writing to y'all this week about some real 100% stuff.

Last night ya boy had an epiphany — an epiphany about life and God. Man, do y'all understand that what we doing out here is straight messed up? The way we living out here is just crazy. Why is it that when y'all go to jail, it's "God, please bless me, help me?" But on the outs, you don't ask him for nothing. You thugging and steady living life in sin.

Man, it's time my young brothers come together and live as one instead of killing each other. It's time to stop calling our beautiful women of all races b's and ho'ees and stuff. Man, y'all phony. Brothers gone laugh, but my 100% brothers gone feel me and ride with this real. For now on, every week I'ma spit some real shhh from the Bible. So get ready for the real, Brothers!

-Brotha Low, San Francisco

From The Beat: Epiphany is a strange thing. We cannot summon it; we cannot bring it about by wishing. It comes when it comes. So, while we are truly thrilled that you have had this epiphany that makes you see the universality of human life — the truth that all humans are God's creation and, therefore, true brothers and sisters — you cannot predict or prescribe when that epiphany might occur in the lives of others. Keep working on making yourself better (and admire the things you've already committed yourself to), and keep teaching. All you can do is that God's light will penetrate the soul of the next person, and the next and the next. We look forward to your next writing.

Flossing our bikes to cursing our rides. But now your gone homie and your killers can't hide. They can only run but their souls I own , and in eternal flames all them tontos will roam...

"Somebody please
Give me just a minute
To explain my misery"

Two weeks passed; now my homie's long gone. We had the last meeting, the mission is on. Roll up to the 'hood with the worst intentions. None of them fools is even paying attention. Kill the lights down the block just for tradition. We get out the car in the shot gun position. Flashlights blasting, fools dropping and running. Females is screaming, me and my dogs straight gunning. Extra clips in the pockets, females in my path. I'm killing everybody, they're gonna feel my wrath. Fools shoulda never tried to mess with real G's.

"Somebody please
Give me just a minute
To explain my misery"

RIP Lil' Popeye

-Temper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Oh, damn, Temper, the tremendous power of your words bring tears to our eyes — even as we wish you were not ruled by revenge (and even as we had to take out some of your lines because they crossed our lines...) But there's nothing much we can tell you about where that path leads that you don't already know. How can you feel, truly feel, the pain you will bring to someone else's "baby, sister and mom?" How can you truly understand that their pain is as real as yours and as valid? How can you be made to feel the significance of the end of a generation of young men set on a pattern of kill for kill for kill for kill? How can you come to see that you will be living alongside those you despise in those "eternal flames" you describe? We hate your hate because we know it will tear you apart and never ease the terrible pain you're feeling, but you have so much power in your words alone that we want to hold you tight and tell you "It'll be all right," even while we know it will not be all right. Do you know your own power, Temper? Do you know that your mind and heart are more powerful than any gun you can bring to ease your pain? Our tears are still falling.

Bad Influences

I have been known as an influence in my life. I have a little sister, and I know she looks up to me. I know the mistakes I have done in the past has affected her by following my steps. When my little sister got in trouble by a previous teacher that I had, I knew it was by my steps. I felt bad because before, I didn't know she looked up to me, and when I found out she did, I was happy. Somebody actually looks up to me. It's amazing.

If I could take back my mistakes, I would because I'd show my little sister that I'm not a bad influence. There are many little kids who people look up to in life, and that's because they consider them as their role model, or their hero. The consequences you make always affects somebody in their lives. I have experienced it and I do regret it.

If I could show my little sister that it was a bad and stupid mistake, I would. I learned from it and I regret doing it and getting my little sister involved/ influenced due to my actions.

-Tommy, San Francisco

From The Beat: The only word we can disagree with in this thoughtful piece is the word "If." Of course you cannot undo what is done — although all of us wish we could undo something in the past. But you can use those hard lessons to create a better future, first for yourself, and then for your sister who looks up to you and will follow your lead. You can be the positive role model you want to be, and both you and your sister will be better for it. Use your fine heart and mind to achieve the model you want to be!

Coke

You lay me out on the flat surface
 Cut, then scrape, put me in lines
 Bring out the straw, visa card or dollar bill
 Bring your nose close to the hole
 Place it on me
 Sniff one, Sniff two, you finished one of me
 Now I've got you
 You catch your breath
 I take you in
 You spin and spin
 Talking without knowing
 Do without caring
 It's all fun for you, at least the first time
 But I really have you now
 You slowly start to step off
 Now you want me more and more
 It's not as fun as it was the first time
 I took ahold
 Now it's almost like work
 Time after time I'm getting deeper and deeper
 You're all sucked up with bags under your eyes
 But you don't care
 You'll steal, you'll cheat
 All for me
 A taste of my sweet candy
 You call my name
 My name is cocaine
 And all I want is you to be mine
 I don't care who you are
 I don't care where you from
 I'll take you down one by one
 So come play with me
 And see if you'll ever be free

-Curious George, Solano

From The Beat: We hope you are staying free—from the substances that imprison you, as well as the system.

Who Is She?

Who is she?
 Can you see her beauty from within?
 Her eyes tell the story of her life.
 And where has she been?

 A good girl,
 But many times she's gone bad.
 Searching for something she always wanted
 Something she never had.

Like a rose in the concrete
 They said she would not grow
 She has goals to prove them wrong
 From everything they think they know.

Looking at her, you cannot say
 She isn't real, she relates to many people,
 And so many things they do feel.

Look at her and tell me
 What is it that you see?
 I know this girl so very well
 Because this girl
 This girl is me!

-Sasha, Fresno

From The Beat: These are powerful words you have here, although we feel that some of the images are borrowed. We want to know more about this girl, what goals are they that need to be reached?

The System's A Joke

Police brutality happens all the time. Cover-ups happen all the time. I have experienced both. It's not about race all the time, I mean this is 2009 where people can get fired for being prejudice.

I'm white and I have been tazed, beat, hit by cop cars for reasons that are ignorant or childish. I mean, I have only been beat and arrested once, all the other times is either because I had a bad attitude or because of my friends.

The police are not innocent but neither is the system, especially against kids. I have two strikes and I'm just a juvenile that has been through Hell and back and trying to get my life together. The system just detains you and throws you back out there into these streets with no help at all.

-Casper, Alameda

From The Beat: Many of us have known of or have experienced unlawful practices by the police, but what can we do? Too many of us have been affected by this but no one seems to hear our voice. What do you think we can do to stop police brutality? We know that it might be hard to change your life after what you went through but you have to try. Don't give up! You could always ask your PO for help in looking up after school activities and programs that can help you. There are people in this world that will hurt you but there are many people who want to help you too.

Hey Beat

What's up? This is your girl Lil' Skittles. Gosh! This week has been crazy! I finally got to go home and visit my family! They were so happy to see me! It was an emotional time for us but we got through it!

I'm in this program and man it's so hard to know that even though you get to go home on weekends, it's still hard to be away from your family. Yeah, I know they always say well it should be no different because when you were on the outs you didn't want to be home anyways, you rather be with your friends on the block--yes that's true, but it's different, because you can choose when you want to go, but when you're in a program or in juvi, you don't have a choice, so that's why I think it's hard! I don't know though! It's different for a lot of people.

Well that was all that was on my mind! I only have 58 days left, until I'm gone! I'll catch you on the bright side! Later...

-Lil' Skittles, Solano

From The Beat: You sound pretty bright about life here! We're glad your home visit went well and you have a chance to think about what being with your family means to you.

Gas Chamber

I'm in the billion just chillin' felling kinda crazy but na I aint thizzin' hatters want my life but I aint even trippin' cause I'ma do it big stack my chips and keep living got shot a couple times so I had to start pillin'. Got locked up got out and made millions fresh out the plane and I pulled a few chickens. Posted on the block in my lungs it was purple I'm from a real big hood called

Yung Rell boy I got a little toy thought about things, and I was a little boy had to change my life--so I went to school mom said don't act like a fool so I straightened up and made legal bucks. At one point in my life I got tired of them cuff.

I'm a real man just wanted to stand. Man it feel good to be a real man. "When I get out things is finna change"

-Young Rell, Solano

From The Beat: Nice writing Rell. We see the change from beginning to end in your writing, what's going to change in your life? How do you plan to make the "legal bucks?" And why the title? Did you climb out?

The Value Of One Life

Everybody's life is worth the same, 'cause once it's gone there is no bringing it back. My life is worth as much as the next person's, whether it is a rich person or a homeless person. Every life is the same.

The BART accident caused a lot of drama in the communities because a person of authority took a man's life. When citizens kill citizens, people think it is because of gangs or something.

-Donald, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like both parts of this piece because it tells us that you are a thinker who can get under the surface of things to their heart. (And it tells us that you have a good heart!) But we want you to write about only one topic, not all three, because when you write about more than one, you can't write as much as we'd like to see. What you wrote here is great, but you could have written much more if you focused only on it. For example, we'd like your ideas about how to make people your age respect the lives of others in the same way they demand respect for their own lives. Next time...

They Should Know

They should know I'm right when I talk about life.
 They should know I'm right when I say put down the knife
 I'm right but they don't listen
 I just hope they know I'm just wishin'
 Bad that's what they just pray.
 I hope I get out and make a life in this world
 While all y'all is twistin' up like some curls.
 But what's up wit' The Beat I got a lot I need to say
 Ill say it to the world any time of the day
 They don't want to listen when I say don't do that
 But they go and shoot the bullet
 Make innocents run and scat go to school and do it right
 Stay on homework and keep it tight.
 Do something with yo life
 Work hard and be great.
 'Cause they don't listen to me 'cause they all gonna hate,
 Don't mess up your life, because life you can't repeat twice.
 They should know about me because I'm paying the price.

-Lil' Quan, Alameda

From The Beat: We dig the rhythms of your decisions/Your life revisions and verbal precisions/It's real life lessons you learned and now teach/Now get yourself out and practice what you preach!

I Can't Control What People Think About Me

It's usually impossible to know what people think about you. There's no answer, especially because if you asked them what they think about you, they could be lying. Also, what people think about you is always changing. So no matter what you write down, it's old information. So, unless they think about you the same way their whole lives, whatever they think about you is only temporary.

It depends on who it is, what they think about me. Like, if you ask me who matters what they think, it depends on who you're talking about. Also, who am I to say whose opinion matters in what they think about me? It doesn't matter to me what people think about me. I can't control if they like or hate me. I can't control them and what they think about me.

-Jordan, Marin

From The Beat: We think you're exactly right. People's opinions of us change, and are determined as much by who they are as who we are. But we're interested to know the second part of the question — which is what you would say about yourself. Does your opinion of yourself every change? What do those changes depend on?

Faith

The reason why more people was upset when a police officer kill a person in our community is because everybody looks up to them to do the right thing. Now that we found out that the people we depend on doing the right did something really bad, it would be really hard to feel safe again just because we don't know what they're going to do next.

I don't think it's right for the police officers to carry guns because they think that it's always okay to withdraw their weapons when they pull somebody over.

There's too many people dying in the world, so I really think that instead of trying to solve our problems by violence we should use our head more and just talk it out.

It's going to be real hard to forgive the system for what happen, so the best we could do is have faith that this would never happen again.

-Chow-main, Solano

From The Beat: This is good thinking, we agree that we need to trust that the folks hired to protect and serve do their jobs well. It's important for other folks not to shoot each other too right? People are doing that to each other, for very little reason. Communication is always key, and should be exhausted before anyone considers force. Why do you think this is so frequently overlooked?

Why People Rioted

I think the people rioted for this young man because they're using his death as an example of how bad police brutality is getting. They are not just rioting for this young man but everyone who got beat down or shot by the Oakland police.

My cousin was 22 years old, he was shot and killed by the Oakland police in 2006. He had no guns, no weapons, he was just a suspect, and he was shot and killed. This is a example of police brutality.

I'm happy people rioted, I feel they brought some justice and attention to us little people in the ghetto and not just the rich neighborhoods.

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear about the death of your cousin. What changes do you think the police department (and the BART police) could make, to help ensure that this kind of brutality stops? Then again, we suppose it's a whole different story when you are in the cops shoes.

An Honest Appraisal

If friends, family and people I know wanted to tell me what they really think of me, it would do a big impact. I may hear some positive or negative things, but I think if I was to hear some negative things, for sure I would be mad for a while. I will also be glad they are trusting me to handle it. I mean, if they do tell me, it's an opportunity for me to change my behavior.

I believe everybody in life should have a second chance. Yes, they may blow that second chance, but for some other people, that second chance can do a change and be different. It doesn't matter what they say or do, if I was told, then I would take that chance and change.

I will admit they might say things that are out of proportion, but sometimes I think it's how I feel too. Even though it's not always about me, it's not always about them, either.

-Bailey, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like the fact that you would be willing to hear the negative along with the positive so that you could address what you need to in order to change. But can you tell us what you think they would say? In other words, what do you need to change so that you won't have to give up any more of your life to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do and when to do it? If you had that second chance right now, what would you do differently?

Halloween

If it was Halloween, and everybody was wearing masks would you be able to tell?
 Would you notice the difference in personality? the difference in character, depending on their skin color?
 If you went up to them without prejudice, would people still act harsh?
 Would you be able to tell and hate them just the same? Or would you realize what they were — People, mothers, sons, friends?
 Could you learn to put it aside when the masks come off?
 Would you hate them just to save and change your perspective?
 Black, white, yellow, red — Does it really matter?
 I think not

-Ariana, Marin

From The Beat: Your question is really interesting. Wouldn't it be interesting to see people's outward appearance camouflaged (masked) and confuse those who judge a person by such unimportant characteristics as a person's color? We'd love to read a piece about any experiences you have had with such prejudice, and how you responded to it.

The Realest

I got all the time I need to do whatever I want
 My max is fourteen years ninjas crying over three months
 Came in three deep one of my ninjas was snitching
 Can't handle the pressure they were supposed to stay persistent
 Keep yo mouth shut that's the code of the street
 Ninjas know they are some and after pride come shame
 Had a baby on the way and lost it man
 I told my ninja how it feels and I had a heart full of pain
 I said I didn't a -- about nothing mane
 But on the real I gave a -- about something man
 I'm trying to see the big picture but what I see is tragedy
 Looking at the ceiling thinking why is this happening to me
 While I'm barely getting letters from my family
 It's just another day in jail and they are living life without me

-Big Lano, Alameda

From The Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your baby, and we agree you are faced with much tragedy. You have no choice but to learn how to still live your life, though you will be locked up. You'll have to work to keep your heart open and your mind strong. Your family has to get used to this idea also, and we are sure they want the best for you. What helps you cope? Reading and writing? Have you tried meditation? How about working out, or sports? Get as much education as possible.

Freedom's Worth More Than Money

Before you cut school, sell drugs, shoot, stab or do anything that jeopardizes your freedom, remember it's not worth it. For every dollar you made from that mistake, you could make hundreds more within the time you're locked up. Your freedom is worth more than any amount of money you can make.

If you do happen to get locked up and are freed, don't go back to the same routine because even if you don't get caught, you karma is a screwed, and will come back twice as hard.

-Time, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is so much wisdom in this short piece, it makes us wonder how you got caught up. Did you realize the truth of what you've written only after losing your freedom, or did you already know but ignore what you knew? Whatever the past, we hope you follow your fine advice in the future.

Loyalty Before Dishonor

What's up wit' the homies like what's really really good I grew up wit' my ninjas we all from the same hood But yeah we all outside sippin' bo on the block With a bundle of crack on me and it's like four o'clock We all got the same tats, loyalty to my ninjas Or at least that's what we thought but that shhh real bigger
 We pull up to the gas station lookin' for 24 inches Ready to murk something all lookin' like grinches Waitin' for the right time when we follow 'em home Bounce out of that whip we all got fresh chrome Soon as he open the door move slow give me everything He moved slow but real fast and whipped that thang out his pocket
 He let shots ring and knocked his head out of socket I released the whole clip at his chest and head While I look down at my homie who got shot down dead Me and my other potna carried his body to the car We heard police sirens and they wasn't that far Both streets blocked off ninja what we gonna do I'm bout to run bra you betta do the same too I bounce out of the car and jump over the first gate Standing face to face with a pit bull eyes filled with hate I jump the other gate get down on the ground I look up to a gun hangs up don't make a sound I got booked into Santa Rita and had court the next week Feeling sick to my stomach as I stand up on my feet A couple months later I walk back in the courtroom Still remember in the day that sound, that boom I sit up in my chair as my ninja testify Death before dishonor so the kid rather die After the trial was over I was found guilty So that tattoo ain't mean nothing if you ninjas really feel me One dead one on the streets and one in the pen Which is me I got 100 that ain't nothing like 10 This just a lil' message to people get what you get out of it

-Lil' Purp, Alameda

From The Beat: Once people hit the survival level and you get caught in the system's claws, then all those promises of loyalty go out the window, but we'd rather blame the game than the players. The game is like a casino: The house always wins. Thanks for another gripping story/flow.

Bad Influence

I was a bad influence to my lil' sister because I always back-talked to my parents and didn't listen to them.

I used to be out all night and didn't come home until the next day because I was out drinking and smoking and my sister used to see me when I was drunk and that influenced her to go out to parties and drinking and one day she got alcohol poisoning and they took her to the hospital and her insides were messed up. So she had to get operated on and after all that my mom got really mad at her. But all my sister did was blame everything on me. She told my mom that I drank too and she asked my mom why didn't I get in trouble for drinking and my mom came home yelling at me because she said I was the reason she drank.

So I think I'm a bad influence to my fam bam.

Well, until next time, Beat, I'm out! Shout out to everyone locked up in any facility. Keep your head up. One love and a shout out to my sis.

- S, Fresno

From The Beat: S, thank you for sharing this story and being so honest about the actions you seem to regret. Are you taking steps to staying sober? That action there would be great you're your sister and your mom to see.

To My Dearest Mother

When I look at your picture all I see is pain.

Hurting you all these years just for the respect that comes with my name.

I know it will never be the same. But who's to blame?

Myself.

I'm sorry for the lies, disrespect. I grew up with no father so there was no one to put me in check.

Nowhere to turn so I hit the block, did what I did an' earned respect.

You are the best mother anyone can have. You stick with me now and you stood solid in the past. You're all I ever had. I talked to you on the phone and you said you couldn't move your body. You told me you think this is it, that you felt your last days are coming.

I can't explain my hurt as these tears want to drop.

I pray to God he spares your life.

I'm just a teen. You gotta be here to watch me grow. When I have my baby. When I become a man. I can't go on without you, Mother, you are all I got an' all I ever had. You try an' act like you're happy when I'm around, but you finally told me that truth. I noticed every time I come home. You are skinnier an' skinnier. But, you always got a smile. You are a strong woman so don't give up on me please. You told me you're expecting to go soon and I'm telling you not to.

Love,

- Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, Mousie. This is a very moving piece of writing. Thank you for writing so honestly. We hope, too, that your mother will be with you for a long, long time to come.

Stranger

You're a stranger to my eyes, deceptive in disguise
Yet in my mind memories of you forever lie
Who am I to you? Was this illusion ever true?
'Cause it seems to have appeared directly out the new
It's abundantly clear that the enemy you fear
Since in times of war only the devil was near
For you I would have paid the ultimate price
Stood up and sacrificed without thinking twice
It's a shame you couldn't do for me the same
Just lie and betray then forget you knew my name
Straight overlookin' facts that proved to be vital
While neglecting vigilance to match that false title
Your distorted vision produced only vacuous decisions
So it's no wonder you weren't prepared for the collision
I once viewed you as someone worthy of my respect
'Cause never once did I suspect weakness I'd detect
It's as if another has took possession of your eyes
Like the sold ado in you just departed to the skies
Did I ever know you or did I encounter a mask?
Or did you "forget" how to complete a basic task?
I was down even in those times you didn't ask
But truth be told, your fortress weakened and collapsed
Maybe that's why our so-called friendship didn't last
Now I'm walkin' through the park accompanied by wonder
Asking myself did the barrio take your soul under?
Lies no longer get you far, so tell me who you are
Besides an envious face staring hard from afar

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Consider this Grumpy: It appears you were completely wrong about this person's strengths and weaknesses, believing him to be one thing, but finding out he was another. Is it possible your certainty about other aspects of your life — and you know what we're talking about — is also built on a foundation of sand? Maybe it's time examine your entire belief system!

One Thing I've Always Wanted To Do

I have always wanted to wear the goofy gown/cap that you get when you graduate from high school.

-Arctic Fox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope that you get to wear the goofy cap and gown too, Arctic Fox! What will you do to make sure that you get to wear the graduation cap and gown AND walk the stage?

Since You Been Away

(chorus)

Since you been away I've been lonely
Tryna understand the reason you left me
Since you been away, I've been thinkin' about you
What am I going through

(verse 1)

I'm smoking pack after pack tryna ease the pain
Disintegrated to the lord, god we need some rain
I seen your momma in the streets yesterday
I passed by and said hi and went on my way
Now I'm ridin' on the highway smashin'
Livin' memories in my mind start flashin'
I'm askin' the man upstairs why the world so cold
So until we meet again G, I'll see you at the crossroads
And lord knows that we miss you homie
Every day I wonder why them bullets hit you, homie
But I know that the angels came to get you, homie
Now all we got left is some pictures, homie
I said a prayer for your family to keep 'em safe
So that y'all can run and go with the pearly gates
Your memory survives every passin' day

It ain't the same since the moment that you passed away
(chorus)

(verse 2)

I'm still here, reminiscin' about them good days
When they used to let us kids in the 'hood play
Goin' from a smile for a while, then a frown
The anger that this person tears to the ground
A little brief of grief that may discreate my teeth
And I'm mad and sad that you have to leave
These nights so cold when I ride all alone
Used to be you by my side, now you're gone
Replaced with a chrome, lived behind a sad home
See, I can only see your family and hope they stand strong

But I'm feelin' lost man, I'm so confused
And I'm still the same since they broke the news
It's just heart pain straight out of the fluids
And most homies ain't the same and I'm telling you
'Cause life is a gamble, you win or you lose
Life don't last forever, we all die soon. I miss you

(chorus)

(Bridge)

And it got me sayin',
"Ooooh, I'm missin' you, tell me where the road turns"
And it got me sayin'
"Ooooh, I'm missin' you, tell me where the road turns"

(chorus)

Dedicated to those fallen soldiers

"one love, one life"

Rest in paradise Savage L... One love!

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: To turn pain into art is a gift which we take from your hands with gratitude. We know your words cannot heal your pain, but we also know that they are a blessing because they do not pass the pain on to others, in the endless circle of eye for eye and death for death. We admire you so much.

Skip's Broadcast: Young And Restless

Beat, what up? What happenin'? All you haters could get at me. It's that zero tolerance young hot head ninja Skip modulatin' in this almighty SF County, waitin' for these authority figures to let me be, ya dig?

But I'm young and restless. Yeah, that's me. And now they say I'm "a menace to society." Ha ha. That's comical to me, ya heard me. If I'm a menace to anybody, it's myself. I can't even count some of the maniacal shhh I done endured and took part in. I ain't got enough fingers and toes to count.

The system feels their only option is to send me to Wyoming. Meanwhile, I'm eighteen years old sitting in a juvenile justice center. Is there a problem there? I believe so, but I have caused this and brought this to myself. Maybe if I didn't act like a juvenile I wouldn't be in this predicament.

I've been acting young and reckless, playing with guns, smoking weed, poppin' pills, getting pissy drunk, constant sex, robbing people, beef — and all for what? To keep keeping these four walls and mystery drawe's company. But now like my ninja T.I.P said, "The old me dead and gone."

Now you ask how is it. I mean, I done thought and reflected on my shortcomings and realize it was all for nothin'. Those choices were all routs of being young an' restless.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's clear to us, Skip, that you are moving out of childhood and into adulthood. That is reflected in many ways, but nowhere more clearly than in the sentence: "I done thought and reflected on my shortcomings..." Children don't think or reflect, they act as if they are the center of the universe and there are no consequences. We don't really believe that the old you is "dead and gone" because our old selves always remain a part of us, but as we grow, we add to those selves and by doing so, we become something different, something more. We see that happening in your life, which tells us you have as much to contribute to the people and program in Wyoming as you have to learn. If you were ever "a menace to society," you now have the potential to be a teacher and leader to that same society. Say good-bye to childhood and open your mind to the challenging experiences of adulthood!

My Strengths, My Faults

If my grandparent's were to be able to be here and tell me what they believe my faults are, I would welcome what they have to say and try to correct them. My strengths are a big part of my life, they tie in and intertwine themselves into everyday of my existence.

My grandparent's would say that I've had tough times throughout my life, living with no father and a mother in and out of my life, but that I've made a lot of what I've come from. They would definitely say that one of my strength's are that I'm loyal, but that is also one of my biggest weaknesses. They would also say honesty is one of my most hated and loved strengths. I don't believe a lie should be told if you must, just a false the truth. I've hurt my grandparents with honesty, telling them what I do, it's hard to go through days disappointing and breaking their hearts.

They want me to make more of my life and I do as well but it seems that when I get things right, life gets slower and the road gets harder to travel. They admire me for the way I trudge my way through each day hoping for better but they hate the fact that my life has come to this point and they wish they could've done something better.

-Michael, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're going to do things that your grandparents don't like but that doesn't make you a bad person. We know how much it hurts when our parents or grandparents are disappointed with our decisions but that comes along with growing up. Sooner or later you have to learn to make your own choices and there are going to be times that those choices are great and then there are going to be times that your decisions get you into trouble, but you learn from your mistakes. It's hard to change your lifestyle because it's comfortable and it's what you know but why stay with a life with one way choices to jail? The road to success may be hard to climb but the ending results are more satisfying than sharing a one room cell with some random guy. The choices are there for you to make. We know that you can do it and so do your grandparents, you just have to believe in yourself and work hard.

Huslas Mode

Everyday I'm in a huslas mode
tryna have me some money that's a huslas goal
set up shop on the block and try to dig for the gold
ready to do what I gotta do to survive in these streets and
live in this world

I stay true to the game cuz it made my life change
and I aint never gone change never gone change
Plotting on the money
tryna make it to the top with out a crime scene.
Run ya mouth all it do is bring the team
get smoked like Martin thought ya had a dream...
Ima hustle getting paid is my thing really bout it
ninja kill and die for the green
I cut a ninja finger off just to get the ring, just like a dope
fene.
Do anything to get the cream
Neva had a job neva worked a nine to five
Neva even had a paycheck a day in my whole life
Dirty money from the streets that's how I survive

-Shawny, Solano

From The Beat: This is good writing, with details, rhythm and metaphor. We're not sure whether you are happy with this life, though. The way you write it, we hear no joy, no love. What if you could have that in your life—things you really value and love and enjoy? Would you betray your heart and soul for a little dirty money? You are worth more than that, but you have to believe you can have a different life.

The Value Of One Life

The bad stuff that you do in your life bring things to terrible lifetimes, like when you go out and rob people and do things that you are not supposed to do. What have that person ever done to you? And you're going out to rob people, get in their cars and jump through people's windows? That's not right.

Then, when you get caught, you're up in here. That's the value of life. Look at where you're going to be in five years. You really have to look at things like that, people, really pay attention. Like the judge and the staff. They really can help you keep your life together while you're in here.

And people see things in you different might not judge you the same no more because what you did. But when you get off probation you are doing good. That's really the life of value. Some people can try to help you, but you just don't want their help. You'll act like you're listenin', but like the older people say, it goes through one ear and out the other. So, when people tell you things, try to listen more than you talk.

People know when you are listenin' or when you aren't listenin'. Some things is for people to hear and some things aren't, so that's the life of one value. Or, if you get into something with someone, you can always open your mouth and say things to that person, like, "I know the value of my life, man. I don't want no beef." And that's the step to being the man you are. Then you get a job, and people are like, "He's really on his toes doin' what he gots to do."

Then people are like, "He used to be in jail. Now look at him! He's changed his life. He's out of the gangs and got a job doin' what he got to do."

That's the value of one life.

-Terrance, San Francisco

From The Beat: From reading this, Terrance, we see someone who has thought about life and his role in it more like an adult than a child. You have described a life of value very well. We hope you are able to continue to develop your mind by finishing school, but never finishing getting educated. And never finish expressing yourself, and teaching others what you've learned. Well done!

Wonder

Sometimes I wonder what's going on in my own head. I think that I want to do something with my life. I wonder what it's going to be like ten years from now. I know that as a young man, I am going to have to step to the plate. I wonder what it would have been like if I did this or did that? I wonder what it would have been like if I would have gone to school every day and arrived on time to class. I wonder what it would have been like if I didn't get on probation and violate my probation. I still wonder what it would be like to live my dreams and bring my friends with me. I wonder but I know wondering isn't going to get me where I need to be. I know that I got to try and accomplish what I got to do in order to be where I wonder.

- Marquise, Alameda

From The Beat: Marquise you can do something with your life. Wondering and dreaming is the first step to get you where you need to be. And then, yes, then there is some hard work to get there. You are making great first steps, though. What's next? You can still succeed in school. Then what? Share some more wonders and dreams with us.

How I Feel

I really wouldn't say I am a bad influence on someone else or someone younger. I really feel like I'm a bad influence on myself, because I made bad choices. In my whole life, I never once made anyone do nothing they wouldn't want to do, especially my younger cousins or friends. I don't have any little brother or sister, but I would never in life have someone younger than me do anything they're not supposed to do. I would love to see my younger friends and family do right by going to school and stay out of trouble.

I feel like if I smoke, that's me. I would do it by myself if I did, but I don't. I would especially do that alone, because I feel like that's not a good look for anyone. That's a bad look for everyone. It doesn't do no good for you I life. All it does for you, it maybe will make you feel good from time to time, but it gives you lung cancer, brain damage, bad coughs, and it may even cut your life short.

I really don't feel like taking a drug to make you look good. It doesn't even make you look tougher because these younger kids these days feel like smoking and having sex and shooting guns is a way to fit in, and that is three bad influences that a lot of young kids have these days. They just don't know that smoking really hurts you in the long run, and it sometimes takes you out even faster. Some people's body can't even take drugs, so they die young. That's why I try my best best to stay away from drugs, because — I'm not going to lie — I'm afraid to die.

Now these young kids are killing each other, thinking it's cool, and it's really not. They think they got more than one shot at this game called life, and you really don't. These kids feel like, if they get shot, a bullet will bounce off them and they will be okay, and that's really not true. I feel like they need to put the guns down and pick up a book. They need to gain more knowledge. That's how I feel.

-Jb, San Francisco

From The Beat: It gives us pleasure to read a piece full of such thoughtful advice that you apply to your own life. We agree with every word you've written, and those words tell us that whatever it was that led you here has been a learning experience for you, like the books you read. Of course, you can only control your own actions, your own thinking, so keep doing just that, and let this experience be one that you can put behind you, and learn from. Thank you for this fine piece!

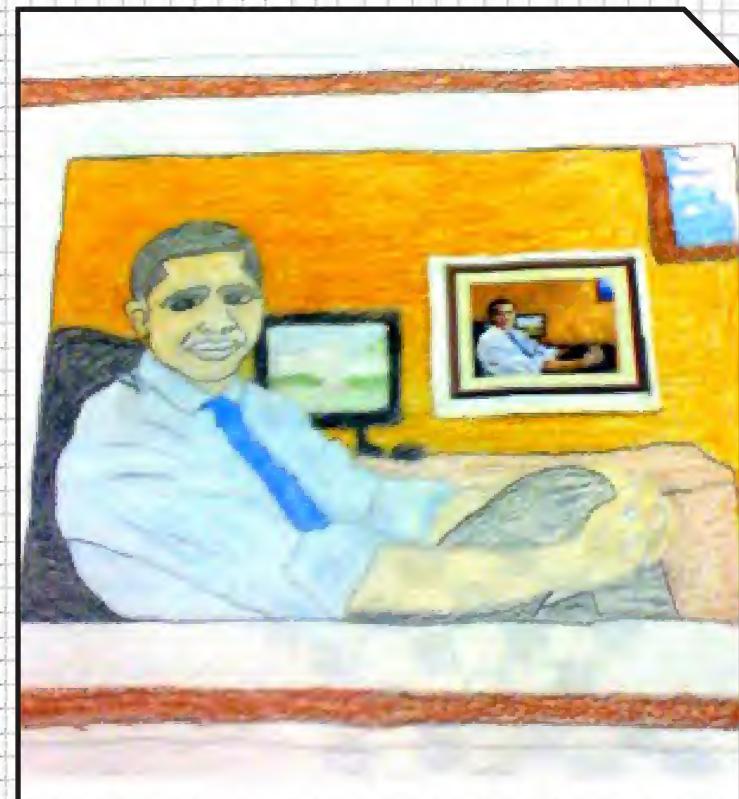
No More!

Hey what's up Beat? Just thought I would drop a few lines.

We'll I would like to write a little story about Prostituting. We'll I myself was a prostitute not by choice, but my mom was always on crack cocaine, and she would always make me go out with other guys just so she could get money for more crack. I never said nothing until I got tired of her and I told her I'm not going to do anything else for her, no more, I told her if she wants' to get money she can do it her self.

-Lil' L, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: It is very sad when we hear stories like this one. We are grateful that you said "No More" to your mother, and were able to get away from that environment. Have you spoken to anyone about his? Has your mother gotten help for her drug addiction? When you get out will you be going to a safe place? Please ask for the help if you need it, don't wait.



Living For Today

Living for today because I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

I pray and pray but these prayers are full of sorrow. The most important thing in life is to know yourself and to know where you stand. Everyone has a purpose in life, and it's not to be locked down and doing time. Mistake after mistake — how much more could my soul take.

Silent laughter of this stranger trying to survive in this life of danger.

Here, then after, I shall take a risk, because in the mist of my own confusion I could be permanently bruised by bad news.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Heck of a poem Oscar, and loaded with insight into your own character. We know you can become the person you want to be. Keep working, reading writing, and sharing. At some point, you'll need to consider finding a way to express your sorrow, and to apologize, for any pain you've caused to others.

One Thing I've Always Wanted To Do

One thing that I have always wanted to do is make my mother happy and show her that I appreciate everything that she has done in my and my sisters lives.

My mother has been paralyzed for 22 years. She was shot by my older sister's father in 1986. She is a very strong woman that has been through a lot. A former drug addict, and a single disabled mother, I think she deserves the world.

No matter what I do my mother is on my side and I can always depend on her. Even though it's hard raising three kids by herself she does the best she can to keep us happy.

I get mad at myself for being in here and not being able to be there for her like she's been there for me. I just hope one day I can change the circumstances and make her proud. I want her to be able to sit back relax and not have to worry about nothing and finally be genuinely happy.

My mother is very supporting in every aspect. Even though I messed up by coming here she never misses a court date and visits me weekly. She is so dedicated to being there for me. I commend her for everything she does. Every Sunday she takes BART from Berkeley to Bayfair and then gets in a taxi cab to come see me so I won't feel abandoned or discouraged and I love her for that. More than anything I want to make her happy.

-B, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mother sounds like an amazing woman—a true hero in our midst. Thank you for sharing her story. We know you can make her proud, but when will you do just that? Hopefully now!

The Value of Life

Life... Life is beautiful; life is hard; life is precious; life is problems; life is sorrow; life is happiness; life is everything.

When you are about to die, who and what are you going to think about? For a quick suggestion, do you think of family? Do you think of what more you could've done with your life?

In reality, we all want to be someone, as in rich, famous, and strong mentally and physically, but we can dream until we make an attempt to follow it. To tell you the truth, my life is worth my family's life any day and second of the year. I would give it up so they can breathe and endure life's precious moments.

I also believe everyone is equal and they have an equal opportunity to become someone. Murder is a strong word. It expresses the definition of another person taking one's life. Murder can bring anger, respect, hate, grief, pleasure all in one action. I love life and I know by now you understand this, so I feel I don't need to express it thoroughly.

As I sit in my cell, I remember all the times I could've died because of my stupidity, like when I was drunk and I stole a car. I blacked out, but my homeboy said I was driving hella fast, then I abruptly stepped on the brakes and stopped in the middle of an expressway. Shhh! Thinking of that moment still gives me chills till this day. I hope I don't do that action again because being in here shows you how great life is and what you can make of it.

So alratos to all the homeboys doing time. Shaoooo from the homie in the max.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Offering your life for your family's is noble, but how much poorer their life would be without you in it! No, Chango, you must not die for them, but live for them. You are so full of life, it can only inspire those who are touched by your soul, as we are! We're glad we weren't behind you that day on the expressway, just as we're glad that we are behind you now!

OBAMA ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS



"Me, Myself, And I"

Verse 1:

It's the first time where I feel like I got no control,
 The walls are talking but I know I'm all alone.
 I'm hearin' voices but it's just me, myself, and I, "Chico".
 I'm hittin' you with the sickest flows,
 In a single cell so you know I'm ridin' solo.
 Hella bored so I'm starin' out of my window,
 My mind is gone but I ain't off that indo.
 Damn, young boy must be a schizo,
 Talking to my own freakin' echo...echo...echo's....
 Don't get wet yet 'cause this is just an intro
 To my sick and sadistic "Lil' World".
 Quick grab the phone and call a mental hospital,
 I'm going crazy in here I need to be counseled.
 I'm a hazard to myself and I'm beginning to get hostile,
 I know you want to help but think 'bout what it'll cost you.
 Quit actin' and take off your costume,
 You wouldn't want to be locked up in a single cell room
 Look, I'm all by myself with nobody to talk to.

Chorus:

It's just me, myself, and I in a room, a room, a room
 It's just me, myself, and I in a room, a room, a room.

Verse 2:

Solitaire got me feeling so lonely,
 No one by my side, I'm the one and only.
 Can't trust no one not even the homies
 In the end they'll prove that they're phony.
 There should be two of me so go ahead and clone me.
 My brain is gone but I'm still hangin' on,
 The lyrics so sick you should reread this song.
 I'm a criminal so they always thinkin' I'm doin' something wrong,
 Take me away from the group you know I'm gonna counterplot,
 And I can't stop not until my body gives up and I drop.
 It doesn't help to put me away by myself,
 It angers me, enflamed with rage and I know
 Everyone can see so I'll take the opportunity to
 Release my stress on The Beat.
 Sometimes, I really think I'm crazy
 I guess room nine's really gettin' to me.

Chorus:

It's just me, myself, and I in a room, a room, a room
 It's just me, myself, and I in a room, a room, a room.

-Chico, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this flow with The Beat. We know that juvie can be a lonely and desolate place but why do you think that you've ended up in the system? Maybe being separated from the rest of the group is a good thing, Chico, you can think for yourself instead of being swayed by what the other kids are doing. We can see that you are very bright and very intelligent so go ahead and use that intelligence to your advantage and do something with your mind!

My Pain on Paper

If I could put my life down on a piece of paper
 To explain the pain that goes on everyday of my life,
 It would be a trip but still wouldn't feel right.
 It seems to me that I can't dig deep enough.
 See, my pain builds up 'till there's no more room to go,
 I try hard to hold on but I always seem to let go.
 I got a smile on my face to replace and hide the pain,
 Can't show that I'm two-steps from going insane.
 Tryin to keep my head up 'cause it always seems to be
 down,
 Tryin' to look up at the sky 'cause I'm tired of looking at
 the ground. I see the bottom of every bottle
 But that's just my life and that's just me
 'Cause no one ever said life's gonna be easy.

-David, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What an emotionally stirring piece. It's hard for us to speak openly about our emotions, but eventually we have to get over these things because if you keep on bottling and hiding your emotions then they build and build and build until you finally explode, that's never a good thing. Writing is a great way to let it out but even then it's not enough. Is there anyone you can go to, to speak about your feelings, maybe a close friend or a counselor? Stay up, David, life is hard now but it always gets harder before it gets better.

Locked Up

I'ma let you know
 This days are going slow
 This system ain't no game
 Locked up it's a shame
 Can't get myself right
 I feel like I'm bout to fight
 In three months I'ma bounce
 Actually be free
 Can't wait til I kick it with my friends
 I don't seem to learn my lesson
 This is a true confession
 Don't make this mistake
 Then you end up an intake
 Then you won't know what to do
 You turn out to be a foo

-Trouble, Solano

From The Beat: What do you think it will take to learn your lesson? We know a lot of guys who get the lesson when they're looking at time at CYA or the pen. Then they get it, but it's too late—much of their life will be wasted there and they are kept from their families and the women they love. What else is important to you besides your friends? You want to develop that too, and your true friends will support you with that.

The Blood Brother You Need Is Locked Up

So sad, so sad. It crashes my heart that I ain't there for you. Now you signing for that program for kids that want a brother. When I heard about it, it just made me so crazy. You have a brother with the same blood, but he's locked up.

I'm so sorry that I'm not there for you, bro', teaching you from right to wrong. I just hope you don't become like this criminal, locked up from not knowing from right to wrong. I love you, bro, even if you hate me for not being there for you. But just know that I'll do anything to take you out of harm's way.

-Baby Pitt, Marin

From The Beat: Of course, the most important thing you can do to keep your brother out of harm's way is to set the example through your own conduct. It's clear how much it hurts you to realize that your bad example has led your little brother to seek such an example in the Big Brother program, but we hope you see this is a partial triumph for you, too. He is reaching out in the right direction to get help, and we know he is thinking of you as he does so. When you get home, be the big brother you want to be. You need each other.

To Forgive

Beat – it's me Sammy. I am very familiar with The Beat because I'm from Santa Clara County, and now I live here.

Well, about this topic. There was a time, 8 or 9 months ago when I just got out from doing 2 months in the hall. I went to my lady's house in San Jose, and I saw a homie I went to school with before I got locked up. He was cool, I guess. He was chillin' in the living room, next to my lady, watching TV. Her brother, step mom, and her grandma was there. I said hi to everyone and said thanks for writing while I was locked up. My lady gave me a hug and kissed me.

Then I was talking to her little brother, who was a young teen at the time. He was telling me that my homie always came over to kick it with him, but usually paid attention to my lady. Then, out of jealousy, I got up, ran to the living room and started getting physical with that fool. My lady, her step mom, and her little brother struggled to pull me away. I stopped, then I turned to my lady and broke up with her. But then, a couple months later, got back together with her.

The point of this story is that after that day I didn't forgive that fool. He was supposed to be a homie. But he tried getting at my lady behind everyone's back. I never forgave him after that day, and until now, I still hold a grudge on him.

-Sammy, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sammy, is it possible for you to put yourself in your homie's shoes? You know darn well that you've sometimes admired another homie's girlfriend. One way of looking at it is that your homie has good taste. Whatever happened, or did not happen, violence is not the solution. In fact, it appears that your tendency to respond without thinking may be part of the reason you're in juvy right now. Think before you act. Talk things out when there's a problem. It will save you a lot of grief.

The Ghetto Ways

I live in a place, call Vallejo California!
 We all got jobs and I'm...

My friend isn't my so called friends!
 I don't need them I roll by myself to the end!

It's not pretend, I'm the real thing.
 I'm all about money aka so called green.

My dream, is to make my life perfect.
 I never thought I'll be in here writing verses.

I use people for the things they got.
 I got ghetto ways believe it or not.

I'm stuck on spot, thinking about the past days.
 I look into the sky, ask can I change my ways?

I'm stuck in a daze, that I can't control.
 I been this way, every since I was 11 years old.

I'm trying to step my game up, to the next phase
 the question I ask myself is can I change my ghetto ways?

- Ray, Solano

From The Beat: How are you going to find the answer to your question, can you change? Why are you "stuck in a daze" that you can't control? Do you mean that you think differently than you act, and you wonder why you don't start acting how you think? Breaking habits can be challenging, but it's definitely possible. Be careful what you name yourself, let your identity and your job description match who you want to be.

Opinion

"One man's dirt is another man's treasure." "You can see a flaw and someone else can see a good trait." Like speaking your mind, one person could dislike it and another may think it's a good thing to do. The definition is it's an "opinion" and it all depends on how the person takes the comment.

Me myself, I don't like constructive criticism, keep your suggestions and thoughts in your mouth. Someone else could appreciate it and try to apply it. Think about the person your giving the appraisal to. If you "assume" the person might be offended or take it wrong.

My suggestion is don't say it if you "know" they'll accept your opinion, go on and appraise.

-Jon Jon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What do you think would be a better way to approach someone with constructive criticism? What if it's your mother telling you something that she doesn't like about you, would you still become angry?

Love For Money

"Money is the ruler of evil!" That's what my elders say. At five I got my first dollar an' the greed started, then I just wanted money, money, money. Why, you tell me. Is it I can go in the store an' buy what I want? Was it I like the color green? Or was it just a greed? I don't know, but as I got older, that greed grew. I was not satisfied with chips, gummy worms an' soda anymore, I wanted my money to look like that big homie' on the corner, fat stack enough to put a stack of ones an' fives in one pocket, tens an' twenties in another, fifties in another an' hundreds in another.

So I started robbing. I was never good at selling drugs, but robbing people was easy, 'til I got my first case, then my greed got worse. Somebody told me, "You can't beef without stacks," so my greed got even bigger. Then I started robbing houses, stores, an' all, but never a bank. I want to, but now I gotta stop.

I got a baby on the way, so I gotta stop. Let's just say I don't know if my greed for money surpasses my love for my child. I'ma try an' change, but I ain't gone lie—it's gone be a hard task. An' with that, I'm gone, fast.

-Racks, San Francisco

From The Beat: The actual expression from the Bible is, "The love of money is the root of all evil." (1 Timothy 6:10) We admire you for your honesty, but we hope you look very carefully at what you've written about wondering which you'll love more, money or your child. If you choose money over your own child (that didn't ask to be born), what will you be contributing to your child? Clearly, you made a baby before you were out of your own childhood. Now that you have, it's time to step up to the plate and put your own wishes and desires to the side while you focus on your responsibility to this new life. That is what it means to be an adult.

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

If my family told me how they honestly thought of me, they would say I'm smart and deep, but made a lot of wrong choices. They know I've been through a lot and that I seen a lot. My faults were runnin' with the wrong people.

But at the time they weren't wrong. We was all young. My strength is the knowledge I have, and that I'm willing to learn a lot more. But no matter what I do or be in life, my family will always love me.

-Mo' Cash, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your strength is that you are honest with yourself, and that is a strength we admire. How can you turn that willingness to learn and your natural intelligence to your advantage so that you can confront your weaknesses and turn them into strengths — the kind that will keep you free?

Think Twice

Beat, I'm still here in the max unit. It's the real Peanutt on this Beat article for today. But these topics I'm not really feeling. I want to just talk about what's on my mind.

Well, I'm looking at a lot of time. I feel like I just threw my life away. I had every thing going for myself, from work to a lovely family and being with my wife. I was making plans for my future with my wife, like having kids and getting a house — basically, living a precious moment life.

But I got to just keep a good head on my shoulders and focus on the day that I wake up to, and just forget about the past. "Tomorrow will take care of itself." That's a little saying I got from the Bible when I was on my worst days up in here. Well, I got to say I keep going day to day and night by night because of my family support.

Plus, my wife is sticking by my side through my most hardest times in my life. I love her for that. Babe, it's forever, so be strong "Precious."

Well, I hope the judge has mercy on me and gives me this last chance to overcome this obstacle I'm in, but I'm going to do my time like a man, move on and continue my future with my lady and be what I want to be in life. No one will change my mind frame or corrupt my life I lead. I'm a man of my choices, hate it or love it. I'm going to still stand like a soldier and think about my family and #1 wife.

Well homeboys and homegirls, stay up and think twice about life before reality hits you and you can't turn back the hands of time. Much love and respect. Love you "Precious."

-Peanutt, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It must hurt a lot to realize how much you have given up — even temporarily — for whatever it was that caused you to risk it all. Your advice to think twice before you find yourself in the "What if" frame of mind is excellent. We admire you for standing tall, and for setting out goals that you can achieve, even if you have to wait to achieve them. Your attitude is probably the most important thing you have to keep you moving forward and not allowing anyone to knock you off track. You've got your eyes on the prize; keep them there!

Bad influence

Bad influence? I have it all around me. It's at home, in the streets, schools. How can we escape it? I don't think you can.

My bad influence was my friends always influencing me to do the wrong thing. But it's on you if you want to follow their advice or bad influence. I sure don't want to, not any more. We're all gonna have bad influence in our life, but we don't have to follow it.

-Cash, Santa Clara

From The Beat: One of the hardest things we can do as children or adults is to say "No" to our friends, even when we know that's what we should say. What do you want to do when you touch down? What's your plan?

My Past Was The Rag

My past was based on the color of a rag. The rag brought nothing but pain and suffering in my life. The rag caused my friends to disappear one by one. As I tried to leave the past, loved ones would get hurt. I suggest that you leave your past before loved ones get hurt.

-Arturo, Marin

From The Beat: Your suggestion to put the rag down is so important for yourself and for others. (Sometimes, we wish countries would lay down their rags — their flags — and end war!) What has the hardest part of this transformation been for you? Is it still in progress, or is that chapter behind you?

Surprisingly Great

Life is great and surprising in many ways.
 I never thought I'd smoke
 Now I'm blowing purple haze
 I think of the things that come and go in my life
 I remember the time I almost got stabbed with a knife
 But life is great how could I complain
 Why would I blame God for almost going insane?
 The drugs they take me, no I don't take them
 I only get high and cough up red phlegm
 The streets start twisting, waving, dipping
 And I hold onto my bed with all my gripping
 I wake up the next day with a smile on my face
 Because my movement has sped up and not in a slow pace
 I go to the debtor and collect my huge pay
 Then I thank my Lord God for another great day.

-Bear, Fresno

From The Beat: There is so much to be thankful for...your interesting poem leaves us wondering more about your life, why you are choosing to smoke if it makes you cough up phlegm and whether collecting from debtors puts you in danger. You have talent...keep writing and telling your story.

One Thing I Want To Do

Well, one thing that I wanna do is get out of here because my daughter was born already and I am in here. I wanna raise my daughter right so she won't go through what I am going through.

I am gonna give her more choices like giving her more attention and raising her my way instead of having other people raise her. I think that the environment that we live in makes us who we are, so I'm gonna make sure I live in the right place so she won't see the wrong ideas.

- Pelon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're too right, the communities we live in can either make us or break us. We wish that this weren't true. That even if we lived in a horrible place it wouldn't affect us but it does. We can see that you have high goals as a father and we know that you'll be great. Fatherhood is a scary and beautiful experience and you'll learn a lot of life lessons as you go. The first thing you can do to ensure your daughter a good future is to stay out of the hall and in her life! She needs her father home more than the system needs you there. We hope that your life and your daughter's life will be filled with happiness and joy from now on.

To Take Another's Life Is To Insult God

I'm just say this. I know anybody's life shouldn't be taken or lost. Everyone's life is valuable. Everybody plays a part in the world. Whoever feels like their life is better than the next person is arrogant. God went to the cross for all our sins.

-Sb, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is very short, but it's very full at the same time. How do you think it is that so many people who say they believe in God can be so careless about God's creation?

How I Feel

This is how I feel — cold, dark, lonely, in the nothingness that I am. The people around me do not feel what I do only because no one feels the same. Yet everyone does in one way or another.

-Kc, Marin

From The Beat: Feeling cold and dark is part of every prisoner's landscape, from time to time. But it's temporary, just as your feeling of being nothing is. You are far from nothing. In just three short sentences, you've managed to say so much about yourself individually, as well as about the entire human condition. You are something, and something quite remarkable. We would love to read much more.

The Big L

What's good, Beat? Me? Nothin', just takin' it day by day.

Well, today I want to talk about the Big L. Yeah twenty-five to life. See, everyone don't want to get to that point but when you don't think you can get to that point, it can happen to you, it just happens.

I get irritated when kids complain about getting six months or a year. Now when you get twenty-five what you gonna do? I never thought that some shhh like this would happen to me, now I'm sittin' here just waitin' to see what's gonna happen to me. I'm a seventeen-year-old diva rippin' to the day I die, lookin' at the rest of my life in prison. So all I can say to you youngstas is be cool 'cause you don't know what's goin' to happen to you.

In five months, on my court day, I will be headed to Elmwood. Damn time went by...and all ya'll complainin' about little time you should be thankful and don't take it for granted 'cause that one time can be the last. Well, stay up, I love you and we goin' to make it. To all stay up.

-Faith, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This must be so challenging coping with this sentence looming over your head? We understand how irritated you must feel to be around others who are spending a few days in juvie when you've got your own problems to deal with, but you have to remember that they might not have the same amount of strength as you. Instead of becoming irritated by what they have to say you could help them cope with their lock up, whether they're only there for a day or an hour. You have a lot of wisdom to pass on, Faith, and we encourage you to be that teacher, to help others see that this is not the lifestyle to lead!

Ain't Gotta Find It

Why feel the way I feel?
 Is it because I hold a pistol
 So I ain't burled under a grave hill.
 I'm a family man so I protect my hood.
 Grinding on and off the block because the money good.
 Not rich or in school like I should.
 I wanna be on top my family living lavish like we could.
 Everyday a struggle but a solid will pull through it.
 It's everyday in California life and it ain't nothing to it.
 I'm sick of coming here I ain't weak minded. I stay solid.
 I know where my heart is so I ain't gotta find it.

-Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: We know yo' heart beats solid in yo' chest/But that life you leadin' won't let you rest/the pistol in your pocket gives the cops and excuse/to take you in and keep you there and never let you loose. The money ain't worth it, not with a baby on the way/you need to go legit and earn that honest pay!

Why

Why did he party that night
 Why? Why did that officer have
 To work that shift that night
 Why? Now his child won't get
 To see his father at night
 Why why why who
 Can really tell us
 Why are we statistics
 That are born to die
 Because we're not white damn
 We're born to live one hell
 Of a life. Can you tell me why?
 If you want the answer pray and
 Ask God why why why?

-Son Of God, Alameda

From The Beat: We can't answer your questions really, but do think it's important to ask. It takes a lifetime to think about these things, and sometimes you may change your mind as you grow and change. How do you answer this for yourself now?

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

Yeah, I would want them to tell because I think it would better me as a person. I think some of my faults would be running with the wrong people, using drugs, marijuana, alcohol, not going to school. I think some of my strengths would be my personality, good looks. I'm athletic, and I'm a bright young man.

-Donald, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're more than "a bright young man," you're an honest and thoughtful young man as well. How can you use your own "honest appraisal" to confront your "faults" as you describe them so that they do not undermine your strengths? (And, once again, please choose just one topic to address.)

Bad Influences

It's true, because a lot of people don't make moves or do certain things without their friends. People sometimes don't let people they hang around with make their own decisions, but try to make those decisions for them. A lot of people nowadays fall short of being their own men, so they let their friends take control.

It's not cool for anybody to influence the next person, because that doesn't give a person a chance to think for themselves. That takes that person's best ability and that's to think.

I influenced my lil' brother. Now he be thuggin' like me, when I took him to the block.

-The Shotty Ninja, San Francisco

From The Beat: We all look to those around us to model our behavior after, so it must hurt to see your brother modeling his behavior after yours. The question is, does it hurt enough to make you want to change the model that he follows? In other words, when you get home, will you have the strength (and the courage) to be the example you want your brother to follow, instead of the example you wish he would avoid?

For My Mom

When I look at your picture, Mom, I see hurt, pain an' sorrow. I'm locked up once again an' the only picture I have of you you're frowning because life has worn your out.

You been sick all my life an' you carried on like it was nothing.

Then I get locked up an' you tell me your body givin' up on you an' you think you gonna pass, that you can't see or feel right. You are weak but you want to be strong and spend your last days at home.

When I talked to you on the phone you said Mijo, I love you an' miss you an' grow up to be a man in case I don't wake up tomorrow. Love, your son,

-Ronnie, Alameda

From The Beat: Ronnie, we really hope that your mom is okay and you'll see her soon. You are a great son to be writing about her so lovingly. It will mean a lot to her, but what will mean more to her is you getting out and living a life free of the system!

One Thing I Always Wanted To Do

One thing I always wanted to do is find that one girl and be faithful, because on some real shhh, messing with all these different females is really a headache, for real. Plus, nowadays these females is really burning up everything. If you stay with one female and be faithful, you ain't got to trip off none of that. See me, I'm good. I got my one wife Jazanae. For the first time Daddy-O is being faithful. Can you believe that? Damn. One thing I always wanted to do.

-Daddy-O, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, we can believe it. It's a sign of real respect when you can be faithful to the one person you want in your life. Hope it works!

Bad Influences Stealin' Cars

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Nano from Camp Sweeney.

Well today I'ma write about bad influences. I was a bad influence to one person. He's sixteen years old. One time I took him with me to steal a car, and then from there every time I saw him with stolen cars.

But then I talked to him and he never stole a car, well I think he didn't. At first I didn't feel nothin', but then I recognized that I had done wrong by taking him with me. So when I had the talked with him I felt good.

All I got to say don't be a bad influence to your lil' friends 'cause they can be in a lot of trouble way to cause he was hanging around the wrong people.

-Nano, Alameda

From The Beat: Good story with a good moral. Thanks for sharing it with The Beat. For next time, tell us about a time when you were a good influence!

Skip's Broadcast: Freestyle For 2009

It's '09 man, a brand new year
Cry some brand new tears
Got some brand new gear
With some brand new fears
We swore we was gon get a year full of peace
But now a ninja shot by the BART police
That was New Year's Day, already livin' the drama
I gotta write me a letter to Barack Obama
Like, "Dear Mr. President, tell me what to do.
These ninjas actin' up in the 'hood, send mo' troops!"
Yeah, I know we was told that we gon see change
It's a shame what the hell a ninja do for the fame
Females change direction like an escalator
Lil' Wayne on the top like the numerator
But that was '08... This is now, that was then
I wonder, will a ninja live to see 2010

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: Tell us what your hopes for Skip are in the new year. No one can promise what the future holds, but we know some actions put your life at risk while others push your life forward. From what we read, we think you are on a path to a better future, even if you have some obstacles to overcome and uncertainties. (Sorry, but we cannot put your name down as you wished...)

Ready to Make A Change

What's good Beat this ya boy Nuttso Savage yeah I'm back in ere but I'm ready to make a change even if it hurt me. Because these four walls aint for me.

I know change is all in your mind and if you're really willing to do it. I've been here ten times all because I went back to what I was doing before I came here (selling drugs, not going to school, and the one thing that leads most kids here...not listening to my mom) but now I'm seventeen and eighteen is right around the corner for me.

And to keep it all the way savage I'm not trying to see Rita. Not that I'm scared but why go to a bigger jail when I wasted so much of my life in these four walls missing my family, my girl, my ma, ninjas. It aint worth my time no more. That's why I'm ready to make a change feel me. It's 2009 and that's my New Years resolution, not to come back to jail when I touch down but my hand starting to hurt, get at me Beat.

-Young Nuttso, Alameda

From The Beat: So good, you're ready. Now make a good list of plans for what you're going to do, (ie. get a job—and where you plan to look, help Mom out at home, so she'll learn to trust you again—and what you plan to do... and what you plan to do when the streets call and you don't answer...) set some goals, (ie. college?, travel?...) and practice as many "changes" in your attitude to the world as possible from this minute on.

Breach Of Freedom

Boring, stupid, anticipating rots
All because he smokes the pots
Diluted, convoluted, false ways
Now I'm sitting in the cell to pay
Dumb people, dumber watchers
How the hell does this place get sponsors
Eight months, no law breaking, no drugs, no bubbly
Piece of cake, I'm out of troubly

-Anonymous, Marin

From The Beat: With skills like the ones you reveal here, why would you want to remain "Anonymous?" (We had to change UAs 'cause we don't know what the letters stand for...) That last little couplet is not only funny to read (it is that), but it also should tell you something about how to stay out of places like this. "No bubbly, no troubly!" Easy to do here, harder to do out there. But just as important!

Do Something Positive

Hey, what's up Beat? It's Snoop's. I want to talk about when I was out there hanging with the wrong people, and what led me to be here. I stabbed someone in broad daylight in a bus more than 20 times. Now I'm about to do 15 years to life 'cause my stupidness.

I just want people to understand that it's better to be outside doing something positive. Think about your family and yourself and do something amazing with your life.

-Lil' Snoop's, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you think about what you did, do you ever consider not just the stupidity of your act, but the reality of the boy you stabbed? Do you ever think about how, under slightly different conditions, you could have been him and he could have been you? Do you think of the mother and brothers and sisters that have been left behind? This is all part of growing up, and that process lasts a lifetime, so we're eager to see where it takes you.

Real How It Is

A'ight, I'm a real ninja till the death of me. Don't get me wrong. Don't none of that other shhh run through my veins. So with that said, I'm gone touch off on some real shhh... with my real ninjas.

Now we supposed to be walking around with our heads high 'cause we got a "black dude" for a president. (I wish y'all could see my face right now...) Shhh still been getting ugly for me every day. It's like I'm playing chess in this thang and everywhere I go is check. I ain't the type that sacrifice "pieces!" Guess I was playing for the moment and not the future...

But regrets? Do I have any? Naw! It's like what a wise man said once. "Had I been a slave, watching these people do what they did to my wife, my children I would have preferred death. But this is what I don't understand — why so many men did not fight 'Until Death' you see."

But the way I see it, no matter the problem or the situation you in, being back is the beneficiary of a great inheritance and only we are capable of carrying such burdens that we have, and those burdens we carry with so much swag. So I say again, regrets? Do I have any? Not at all. Bottom line — this world ain't shhh...but life still "moves on."

-E-Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your life is not going to get magically better just because there is a black man in the White House — any more than the lives of white people got better when George Bush was the president. But what it does mean is that the country itself is not the same as when white men kept black men (and women and children) as their slaves. Why didn't more slaves unite to fight back? That's a deep question, and one that we cannot answer because we only live in our time and our thinking is of our time. You are so right about the great inheritance the black race carries, which is why it's so painful to see so many hurting so many. Until all human beings respect all human beings, the world will continue to be less than what we want it to be. The world may not be shhh, but you are, and it's important never to forget that.

A Brutally Honest Response

Me honestly when people first meet me I think they think I'm a mean and dangerous person. Mostly because of the stuff I talk about and people I hang around, I hang around a lot of bad people.

To me they aren't bad people their just like me I've been through a lot of stuff in so little time.

From witnessing my brother and god-dad die basically in front of my face. To me that makes my personality "hard core." I don't try to make people think I'm hard core or get down if just comes out like that.

Don't get it twisted it's a nice and soft side to the infamous Jojo. A lot of people that know me have seen that side but those people that don't know me think I'm standoffish.

Like, I'm hard to approach because I stay with a mug on my face and I really don't like being around females. It's not like I don't like meeting new people it's just that I like keeping my circle very very small.

-Lady Royalty, Alameda

From The Beat: Sometimes we push people away because we're scared of what might go wrong if we become close to them. They could betray us, or we could lose them. As scary as these can be, risking it to have people you're close to is usually worth it.

The Streets In San Francisco

Yeah! This your boy Hunter from San Francisco, California, telling you young ninjas to make your momma proud. This is the poem I think out the head. It go like this:

Young ninjas getting smacked, that's what news talk about
Ninjas try to stay off the street, but the question is "how?"
My life is garbage; it's led by violence
Living in a corrupted city, all I hear is sirens
Only could see my mom 45 minutes a day
It wasn't her fault; that's why I have nothing to say
School is the place where I wanna be
Behind on school work, but people still believe in me
Always keep my head up
Don't wanna be six feet underground
Excuse my language, but these ninjas is shhh
Once they get caught up, then ninjas is snitches
Everybody make mistakes that will cause your life
When we little, we used to talk and fight
But now, it's like you gotta watch your back
Stay in your 'hood, holding something fat
Ninjas run they mouth, so they get put to rest
Always keep my mouth closed with every case I catch
In juvie, we eat stale-ash food
Eating gum food, with some dusty-ash dudes
Let you ninjas know, that Hunter gonna bounce back
With my last rhyme I'm gonna end my rap

These to people who been through what I been through. I'm telling y'all right now, "Struggle now, laugh later." Keep y'all head up because you gonna get out one day. I'm gone!

-Hunter, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, you're going to get out one day, and then the struggle begins again. We say "struggle" not so much because of the corrupt life you've described in your rap, but because you don't want to be a part of the corruption. That tells us something about your character, something about your striving for something different. All we can say, Hunter, is that without that desire, no one can rise above the circumstances of their lives; but with that desire, there is no telling where it could lead. Don't give in to the corruption! Don't settle for this! Let your desire to be in school be like an engine that propels you forward. You possess the power to make it happen!

My Pops Didn't Raise Me Like That

Sometimes I ride slow, sometimes I ride quick,
sometimes I buy blow but I supply brick.
Females looking at me sideways
but I'm getting money five ways.
Chattin' with yo boy like ya boy on myspace.
But he's right here in my face.
It's hard being me. 'especially all you know is the street.
Now look at me, writing poems wishing I was free.
My pops didn't raise me like that I know how to behave
and act.
Life is more than getting high off dub sacks.

-Shavy, Alameda

From The Beat: You start off this poem talking up the game, but by the end you're in a wiser place – it sounds like this time in here as shakin' you up and made you reconsider your lifestyle...What is the new you ready to do?

Tick Tock

The way I see it is like this. In my eyes the streets ain't the spirit, but to a ninja like me it's all I got to keep me the way I am, and how I find a way to stay up and kickin'.

But to keep it oh so solid I could really care less of what happen nowadays cause it's "09" and they all gone: Bin Laden gone, Burger gone, Emmitt gone, Lil' O, all my ninjas is real life like not here no more.

But I am. I was doin' the same thang, but I'm still breathin' and the rest of them is either gone or in jail, on the way I see and feel I'm just waitin for my time to come so I can get it over with cause it really ain't shhh left for me. To be continued.

-Lil' Solid, Fresno

From The Beat: So everybody dead now. It sounds like you've givin' up by saying there ain't shhh left for me. What you should be doing is making them proud of you, while they looking down on you from the sky.

Who's The Blame

Yeah, what's up with The Beat, man? I got a little poem I want to share:

Who's the blame, I blame the police.
All them undercovers that scattered on the street.
Young ninjas away gettin' caught selling rocks on the block.
If you really just think, black men always gettin' popped.
Who's the blame
Young men stay locked up 'cause the government.
White men, police, always find a way to rub it in.
The little situation that happened at the BART station.
That police was wrong, good enough they had some information.
Who's the blame
I knew if I got locked up it would hurt my family.
But the only reason why I'm here 'cause of the hood stuff ground me.
I need to get out this place 'cause it feels like hell.
Gotta use the bathroom with another ninja in my cell.
And if you don't like how I'm spittin' this game.
Then can you tell me who's the blame.

-Mike-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: We actually like this poem very much for what it says, but we don't think it says enough. It's not just the government, the police, that are hurting you and other young black men. Too many young black men are helping to keep other young black men down, helping to hurt their own! We hope, when you look at just the color of our new President, you will see that there are other possibilities for your life than the ones you are experiencing. Yes, life's circumstances can grind you down, but you have it inside you to rise above those circumstances – to be better than those who want you to fail. Yes, you can!

Learning From The Past

Thinking back on what that wise man Santayana said, I think he meant that if the past is unknown to you, your future is in jeopardy...and that there are no mistakes in life, only lessons. A lesson is repeated until learned.

If you fall, stand tall. Get up and come back for more. By any means necessary, stay solid. A strong body is good but a strong mind is better. Neither guarantee success but what you make of life is up to you. Just give it your best and you'll have no regrets. We're away from the truth because we're blind. We're blind because of the false beliefs in our minds. Stars are the limits! It's better to reach for the stars and fall short than to never have reached at all. Against all odds, keep your head up, and stay up.

-Shane, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Shane, your thoughts are intelligent. We offer one caveat (look that word up): leave your copy of Bartlett's Familiar Quotations on the shelf next time. Use your own words to express the wisdom you wish to pass along. There may be little that's "new under the sun", but there are always new ways to express the ancient wisdoms.

I Know What They'd Say

If my friends or family was able to tell me honestly exactly what they think of me, I would most definitely want them to. And I want them to keep it one hunnit wit' me! I think it depends on who was talking. If it was moms, she'd be on my line like, "Riquel, you're throwing your life away. You are too smart and beautiful, you know way too much about this shhh, and you know better. I don't know who you think you is Mamas. Wake yo' game up before somebody wake it up for you, straight up!"

That is absolutely most definitely how moms would get at me. She would say a lot more, but that's how the convo would start.

Now one of my friends gone be like, "Ey, Rikk Ross, you got a smart mouth, and you always think you know what you talking about. Can't nobody tell ya nothing, and you be doing too much, The Drama Queen, an over exaggerator... and you move to slow! And a whole bunch of other shhh, but this pencil too small to continue any further!

-Rikki, San Francisco

From The Beat: It seems like you don't need to hear the "unvarnished truth" about yourself; you've already heard it! So, when will what your mom tells you make a difference in how you live so that you won't have to be writing from behind walls?

Love Lost

Pain you feel when lost from love
in the streets dying mentally trying not to give up
how can you love if you have never been loved?
And all your life you've only felt a shove
to even think that someone's love is true
and know that it's easier to lie than tell the truth,
Be honest with yourself through lies you're filled with
most love isn't solid and pain is too thick,
sweet like chocolate sensation it's not forever
but there's more in life it gets better and better
you can't enjoy the love if you're not familiar with hate
in your heart love is trapped and it wants to escape
love is usually lost when you feel the pain
and it's the pain you feel when your lost from love.

-Tae dump, Alameda

From The Beat: When you love in life, which you will, you'll know the value of that—remember to be careful of it because it is precious. There's a story about someone learning to love. They figure they'll start small, learn to love a rock first, then a tree, then a cloud. People are easy to love, and extremely difficult as well. Love is scary but worthwhile.



My Fifth Time And Back Again

One thing I've always wanted to do is get off probation, but it hasn't happened. Every time I get out of this place I always tell my friends and family that I'm going to do good and get off probation. I've been on probation for several years already.

Every time I get out, the first couple of months I'll do good but then I'll start doing drugs, committing crimes, and all the shhh that makes me come back here. I've been here five times already and haven't learned my lesson.

I feel bad for the people who love and care about me. Most of all I feel for my girlfriend. I get letters from her all the time saying how much she misses me. It hurts to know that I won't be seeing her for the next couple of months because I'll be in here waiting to go to my placement. But I promised her that when I get out this time I'll do good. I turn 17 next month and by the time I'm done with my program I'll almost be 18.

So I got to get my shhh together because I don't want to have an adult record, and I want to be out there with my family, friends, and my girlfriend. So basically all this time I'm doing is for me to think long and hard about my future because I don't want to be in and out of jail the rest of my life, I'm tired of people telling me when to shower, eat, sleep. I want to be free and do it when I want to do it. Well that's all I got to say Beat.

-Scott, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Why do you think you haven't learned from your mistakes yet? We hope that this time is the last for you, you're almost 18 and if you keep on going down this path then you're headed to county. Changing is so hard for many people but you have to stick to your goals and your plans if you want to succeed. It's hard but in the end the reward is much sweeter than a tiny cell and an even bigger roommate.

They Say

They say I'm chauvinistic
Cause I act imperialistic
My flows are so exquisite
Got many characteristics
Like cancer dats malignant
These ninjas actin so ignorant
Advanced from the simplistics
Try a new dangin commitment
Do something auspicious
Trying something malicious
From robbin ninjas on Christmas
Or get a job and stack digits
Either way it's ambitious
Just live your life for the vivids

-R-Mac, Fresno

From The Beat: Once again, the R-Mac strikes! Thanks for sharing another one of your pieces. You've got a great command for language. What inspires you to write?

Honest Opinion

I am very talkative so my peer and family know me very well, and also my business.

Grandpa would say I have a bad attitude,
I never listen when he give me good advice.

Ma would say slow down, slow your role, focus on your education and yourself, do something with your life.

My best friend would say, you crazy, you stupid, also you can do something with your life forget a ninja, play a ninja and much more ...everybody else opinion.

I am a good singer, very talented, smart, educated, and got a lot of goals in my life. I say I will do good in 09. Also make my dreams come true as author, singer, modeling, carpenter, painting, and stripper, and social worker,

I would want to be a singer though because I been singing ever since I was five. Also I perform a lot and have a 3rd place trophy and medal at my grandpa house, which I know I can do better,

I would like to be a model because I am slim, tall, and beautiful. I have attended model school before though, stop going. I could have been rich right now. Because once you get in model school you just go to your classes and auditions every week, once you get pierced at a audition you get an accent and start getting money.

I would like to be an author because my life is a biography, though it's hella long and hard to explain if I talk, I would like to be a carpenter/painter because they get dough and that's easy. I would like to be working as a social worker or in juvenile hall to help kids. Tell them how to change life and things I been through.

Last stripper, 'cause I'm sexy and I know I can make them ninjas rain on me.

-Karmeisha, Alameda

From The Beat: You have all these talents and sides to you - we sure hope you get a chance to explore them and win the success you deserve. Go to school and get that education, and we hope you believe that you should make your money on your strength, intelligence and inside beauty... because it's your mind and heart that make you precious.

I would like to be working as a social worker or in juvenile hall to help kids. Tell them how to change life and things I been through.

Sometimes The Day Gets Better

What's really real with you bra?
 It's been along time sent we been together.
 I remember when you said we was going to chill together.
 A lot of years went by and some things got better.
 If it was up to you baby we would change the weather.
 Daytime morning comes when I see the sun.
 A lot of days go by but ya boy still young enough,
 though I'm on the block strapped with a gun.
 A lot of money I can get if God gave me a wish,
 but God gave me better days and I swear that's a wish.
 A lot of people falling down, don't you think that's a trip?
 But I be posted on the block and you swear that's a trip.
 It's getting better everywhere, you would swear I was there.
 But mama told me I should pray so I could have better days.
 I got love for the family but I got love for Big Shay too.
 It's getting better in the house I got a 'station to play.
 It's getting better for yo' boy
 I got a statement to make
 hat I will stay by the real and never by the fake.
 But God is telling me to pray, and sometimes there are better days.

-Dirt Laden, Alameda

From The Beat: What are the better days you see for yourself in the future? What are the better days you are hoping for your family? As for you and writing, wow, you have come such a long way from them. A unit days, keep pushing the pencil and challenging yourself to see beyond the life that keeps you down.

After Love Pt. 1

I'm lonely with nobody to hold me alone in my cell,
 I wish you go to hell,
 Wherever you are, I'm still wishing on a star,
 Even though you are not with me, I know you will remember me,
 I stop living my life to live your life,
 But instead you stabbed me in my heart now I'm cold as ice,
 Recovering is a hard thing to do
 Because I'm always thinking about you,
 Everything I see everywhere I go,
 I remember the places we used to go, our first night was so bright,
 Like a day in summer time,
 The warmth of your body is still in my body,
 My days with you were wonderful and full of life,
 like two love pigeons flying through the sky,
 your eyes made roses colorful like a rainbow in the sky,
 In moments of sadness, we had each other, but now I'm always in sadness,
 Because we're apart from each other,
 I gave you all my love, and you threw it away like a dirty glove,
 I should call the police because you stole my heart, pain should be the definition of love, One day it will happen to you, and you will feel the pain that's in me because of you, When that happens, don't come crying to me,
 Because I won't let you find me, moments of love are moments of pain
 And it's like if your heart was run over by a train.

- Sad Boy, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a broken-hearted song but a beautiful one too, especially for anyone reading The Beat who has ever been on the wrong side of a breakup. We hope you got some comfort from writing these words, and that other "sadboys/girls" will get comfort from reading them.

This Life, These Streets

The night is young
 It's time to ride
 No time to ask just jump inside
 Click Clock goes the Glock
 Bang Bang
 Bodies drop
 A hall storm of gun shots
 Pop Pop Pop
 A sound so strong it can make a heart stop
 There is only evil here
 for all the angels hide in fear
 But what'd you expect to find
 in the streets
 Of a society run by corruption
 violence and greed
 They care not the others pain
 All they know is drugs, power and fame
 This is a dangerous game
 But it is a gangster's way
 In the distance a screech and squeal
 Now you know this is real
 It's time to run or else you're caught
 Get away at all costs
 But would you really kill a cop
 It's what you know. It's what you're taught
 Tick Tock goes the clock
 Time to act. Just one shot.
 Be fast, stay low but it's not
 your hood you don't know where to go
 Left or right
 you chose right. Slammed down and cuffed tight.
 Just like that there goes your life.
 Tick Tock goes the clock
 Years pass but the tears don't stop
 You've killed your mother
 and scared your lover
 What about your son and daughter
 Soon they'll be just like you
 Growing up without a father
 Soon they will have to choose
 to live this life and be their best
 or live these streets and die like the rest.

-Jake, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for that tight poem and we love the message behind the words. Life can be more than running and gunning.

Not Used To Confinement

This place is not as bad as I make it out to be,
 but the program I'm looking into seems a lot more enjoyable.
 My free spirit is not used to confinement.
 Even more overwhelming is being separated from my love.
 A feeling of sorrow and worry creeps into the back door of my troubled mind.
 Is she OK on her own? Am I OK without her?
 Paranoia and insecurity overwhelm me.
 What could she be doing while I'm not around?
 I close my eyes, imagining her warm touch embrace me,
 holding me tight as she confesses her love for me.
 My delusions subside and my heart goes out to her.
 I know she loves me and she knows I love her.

-Sun, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully written. You've said it all. We need say no more.

Gone Bad a Whisper (I'm sorry)

All these young ninjas gone bad
 But don't none of it make me sad
 I heard about that shooting on New Years day
 But your nightmare is what I call a regular day
 Ninjas out here in the town droppin' like flies
 I'm just waiting on when it's my time to die
 I'm out here toting this g-lock on this hot block
 If I smell beef den you know I'm gonna start to flock
 How can you cope in the town of dope
 He thought he was tuff so we took his coke.
 I don't really regret that day but hey
 every homie gonna have his day like I say
 your nightmare is my average day
 I'm in the dark I can't be in the light
 but like a vicious pit I only come out to fight.
 But please put this in The Beat so all the incarcerated
 homies like me could feel me.
 I need help somebody help me. I'm sorry to all the people
 I've hurt.

-Lil' Weto, Alameda

From The Beat: A lot of readers probably do feel where you're coming from. You say you can't break out of the environment you've grown up in - this is a really common thought from our writers. Just keep in mind though that just because something seems impossible at first doesn't mean that it is impossible.

My Thoughts

I don't think I'd want a brutally honest appraisal because I don't think many people in my family like me. But then at the same time I would like to see how my family feels about my strengths. I think they love me to death but at the same time they hate me.

When people say I get in trouble for hanging out with the wrong people, I get frustrated and mad because I see that as them calling me a follower. I think I have been a bad influence on other individuals. I was a bad influence once when I told this girl to smoke marijuana and she was messed up afterwards.

-Dana, Fresno

From The Beat: Listening to family members list all your flaws can be painful to hear, but it might be helpful because it may force you to determine what aspects of your life you need to change. You sound like someone who likes to lead, someone who likes to influence others rather than be influenced. That can be a great quality as long as you lead others in a positive direction.

I Know You Feel Me

Sick of being locked up the staff hella demanding,
 Can't break a solid 'cause I'm still standing.
 Missing home and my mom and my girl too.
 Counting the days with my girl till my baby due.
 Stressed out the box but I refuse to let my head drop.
 I was taught better to never let the system get the best of me.
 I struggle every day to try and speak to my family
 But I struggle to keep sanity.
 Can't wait to have my kid,
 So moms can finally see me grow.
 Instead of handcuffs and cops telling her it's for me to go.
 Ain't tryna see the pen and I know you feel me.
 But do you agree?
 We too solid for the system so be a man and a women
 And get back to your family.

-Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: You've got big changes coming so man up quick/a baby on the way and a mom that's sick/time to get out and away from The block/Get that legit job and reset yo' clock.

Homicides

Ninety-nine Homicides,
 Us city ninjas gotta ride,
 Take lives
 Over pride,
 Basically genocide.
 Taking a ninja life
 Get three strikes,
 Think you earned your stripes?
 Well, you nothing now
 Three years later your patna was just found.
 Ninjas shooting hundred rounds
 Fifty bullets found on the ground,
 It's just life around the streets.
 Gripping the heat,
 Want beef?
 Lil' ninja have you dead in streets.
 See, lil' ninjas creep
 Now your homies six feet deep
 Thinking you protected by your peeps.
 This is life up in Richmond to the east
 Ninjas can't sleep
 So they walking with the' piece.
 You got rain
 I make it sleet
 Grinding your teeth
 Bust your brains see the meat
 Caught walking in the street.

-Tyrell, Alameda

From The Beat: You deliver a real vivid piece showing us how rough it is on the streets. There's a difference between writing about the streets and writing about what you do on the streets. Which was this, Tyrell? We're hoping that this was just an explanation of what you see on the block and not what you do on the block. Be safe, be smart!

We're Brainwashed

Now to reveal the meaning of these sequels and people. You people tend to lie a lot. Some people call 'em habitual liars. Me, myself, I call 'em fraudulent. People do anything just to fit in, like tell fake stories such as you read in the last Beat. These kind are imposters. It many different caliber. Some kill; some steal; some will do just about anything. But don't believe the hype. That's the meanin' of these stories I wrote. People can make up anything.

Now for the sequels, why it was more than one is because the numerous of generation that failed to accumulate and calculate the formation that has been goin' on. But that's 'cause we was never given the information at an early age. So here we are now and the mind state we are now, the mind state we in now don't wanna let us process it as the right thing when we have imagination.

They brainwashin' us for real. Peep game. In 1712 same cracker named Willie Lynch wrote a letter and gave a speech on how to keep us in slavery. Some of his quotes say we lay down the following principles for long range comprehensive economic planning both here and ninja are no good to the economic in wild or nature state. That where the halls and prisons come in to rehabilitate us and take us from our natural state.

-Brown, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is not the first time you've pointed us in the direction of Willie Lynch's advice to slaveholders. But we wish you'd spend some time telling us what you think our "natural state" is, and how you think these halls and prisons prevent you from exercising that natural state. Willie Lynch thought his advice would allow slavery to continue throughout generations to come, but he was wrong about that. Is it possible that he was wrong about much, much more, and that you are doing as much to keep yourself imprisoned as anything he wrote three hundred years ago?



El Dinero

Les voy a contar sobre mis ilusiones que traía desde Guatemala. Traía muchas ilusiones de venir a ganar mucho dinero para comprar un poco de tierra y hacer mi casa.

También quería ayudar a mi madre que necesita mucho de mi ayuda y para que también nos respetaran aquellos quienes se pasan de onda cuando uno no tiene dinero.

Todos los que tiene dinero se creen que tienen todo el mundo. Lo que tienen dinero no valen nada. Dirán que sólo por su dinero van a comprar a todo el mundo, pero se equivocan.

También les voy a decir que el dinero no vale nada en la vida.

También en los Estados Unidos se creen mucho los gabachos y no son más que basuas.

Los Latinos somos chingones porque arriesgamos la vida al cruzar la frontera.

Viva la raza Latina.

From The Beat: Por una parte tienes razón sobre el dinero. El dinero no es todo en la vida. Hay muchas cosas más importantes que el dinero como estar saludable, digno y especialmente estar con las personas que uno quiere. En la otra mano, el dinero es muy importante en la vida. Es lo que nos da el pan de cada día a nuestras mesas. Entendemos que hay personas que tienen más dinero que otras, pero en realidad lo que tienes que hacer es buscar la forma como prepararte en la vida para obtener un buen trabajo y poder mantener a tu familia como se debe hacer. Olvida e ignora a los demás. Vive tu vida.

Money

I'm going to talk about my illusions I had ever since left Guatemala. I had many illusions to come here and gain a lot of money to buy a little bit of land and build my house.

I also wanted to help my mother who needs my help so much and also to gain respect from those who think they're superior when you don't have money.

All those who have money think they own the whole world. Those who have money are nothing. They think they are going to buy the whole world, but they are wrong.

I also want to tell you that money isn't worth it in life.

Some white people in the US think they are that and they're nothing but garbage. Latinos are the best and the only people who risk everything when they cross the border.

Long live my Latin People!

-Carlos, Marin

From The Beat: In a way, you are right about money. Money is not everything in life. There are many other important things than money like being healthy, dignity, and especially to be with the people we love. On the other hand, money is very important in life. It's what brings food to our table every day. We understand that there are other people who have more money than others, but in reality what you have to do is to look for a way to prepare yourself to obtain a good job, and be able to support your family like you're supposed to. Forget and ignore others. Live your life. Be your own person, yet stay legit!

It Is Hard Being Independent

I suffered as a child because I was lied to for most of it. As I grew up I always thought that this guy was my father and it was a lie. Before I knew that he really wasn't my father, I kept asking myself how this man could hurt his own blood like he hurt me. How could he abuse his own daughter and look at her in that way?

I wish that I had had a father that loved me and didn't say cruel things to me. Every night I would pray to God to find me a father that didn't treat me like this. But it didn't happen and one day it got worse when my little sisters were taken away from me and my mother. That is when I found out who my real father was, and then I felt that God did answer my prayers after all. I found out that he was everything that I had been looking forward I didn't have anything to fear anymore.

Now I know deep down that my Papa Bear will always be there for me. I know that I am in here because I have messed up too many times, but I am ready to change, and I know I can do it with him by my side.

-Andrea, Fresno

From The Beat: We are sorry for your past pains, and we wish you luck in the future. It takes one step after another to change and to heal, and you deserve to heal and change. So what are you going to do first?

Don't Run

What up with The Beat? This ya boy, BR. This time I'm writing to point a strong message out to my ninjas running still from the "boys." On a real note, all that need to stop, 'cause they ain't playin'. They killin' us young black men for no reason.

Think of the young man that was shot and killed on purpose. What I think is that it wasn't no accident. That cop shot and killed that kid on purpose, just to make it one less young dude from the 'hood to worry about. He was an intelligent kid, but all that went away, along with his life. When you run, stuff like that happens. When they say, "Stop!" you stop. But if you don't, that's your life. Be coo', y'all.

-Br, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is excellent advice, BR. You may be right (or wrong) about what was in the BART cop's mind when he drew his gun and fired it, but the one thing we know for sure is that another brother is gone forever. But we read every week about young brothers killing other young brothers on purpose. Why is what that cop did wrong, but what the brothers do to each other not equally wrong?

Bad Influence

I have been a bad influence to one of my patnas. I remember one time I had just gotten out of jail and when I got out I needed dough. So I called my patna and told her it was too hot for me and asked her if she could sell week and pills for me and she said yeah.

I met up with her and I gave her bags of weed and pills. A week later she told me she got caught at school and she went to Juvenile Hall for her first time.

I felt bad and responsible for what happened because it was my drugs she was caught with, but it was my drugs she was caught with, but it was her choice I didn't force her. She didn't tell on me and when she got out we were still koo.

I learned that I shouldn't get other people in trouble offering them to sell my drugs. She said she would never do that again.

-Juice, Solano

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your story. Sometimes we all have to learn the hard way. How do you plan to get "dough" when you are released this time? It's worth thinking about so you can make a better plan.

New Plans

Every night I'm looking at my wall plus four,
 Waitin on staff to open my door
 I remember them days when I
 Used to say come out them pockets,
 Now I wish I can blast out of here
 Like a rocket,
 The county food here has no taste,
 So I gotta add salt and pepper
 Everyday, no females no time for fun,
 Gotta get focus on getting my program
 Done, I been to jail five times but this
 Is my last stop,
 Gonna get my life together, I'm tryin'
 'Till my heart stop, the system
 Ain't gonna hold me forever and I'm gonna
 Prove it, I'm gonna get out into the
 World and prove it.

-Lil' Seag

From The Beat: Wanting to stay out just because you don't like being locked up isn't going to keep you out in the long run. Find something to work towards instead of away from, you'll be far more likely to pursue it.

On and On

Hi my name is John, my life my not mot more important than other people's but my life is valuable because I'm the last John left in my family. I lost my grandpa the first John, then I lost my dad John II, so I'm the last. I believe that's the reason why I think my life is valuable because I'm the last living John in my family.

I think one murder can effect the community because whoever was killed may be special to someone and they may want to retaliate bout what happened and they retaliate to the people who did it and they kill who did the first murder then the people who just got killed family wanna retaliate so it's going to be an on and on thing till everybody dies.

-John

From The Beat: We edited your piece some because we aren't allowed to print your last name...We agree that murder effects the community—and everyone is special to someone (we hope!). What do you think might help this cycle you describe?

A Day You Won't Expect

You can expect a lot of things as you walk and breathe
 Until the cops pull up and raise they guns and say
 "freeze"
 You stop then you look hit the corner then you gone
 Think you gone make it but you not going home
 You going to a friend and you think you safe and sound
 Then them lights come up on and you think you going down
 Then somebody start shootin' but you can't see
 So you start to break and run takin' off your white tee
 And you take a rest the second it be the best
 Gazed up on you leg and blood leaking from yo' chest
 It's a long hold but that ain't all
 You think it's ok until some ninja's want to brawl you
 So you get out the way and now you scared
 You reach up friends house but up friend ain't
 Now you mad as heck what's next I can expect
 This is just another day that you won't expect

-Lil' Quan

From The Beat: This is a good piece - keeps the reader on the edge of their seat. Is this something that happened to you or someone you know?

Wow O.M.G.!!

I told one of my friends to run up on someone so he can hang with us and he knocked out this one kid. I felt bad but it was funny.

-Arturo

From The Beat: As you think back on it how do you feel about it now? In the long run who did it affect the most? The kid, your friend, or you?

Easy

I use to be a lil' easy
 But don't get it twisted I was never sleezy
 I've made a few mistakes
 But in life you never get a retake
 You just have to learn
 And respect is what you'll earn
 So for a while now these panties been on lock
 They stayin' up like Fort Knox
 You used to call me a slut an a hoe
 But now that all I been sayin is no
 You can't help but call me stuck up & prude
 You lil' immature boys is just plain confused
 So I went from bein called a slut and a hoe
 To a top notch chick, who's runnin' the show
 Never again will I let a man tell me what to do
 If you think it's goin' down like that you a straight up fool
 I use to think sex would make me feel loved
 But the only love I need is from up above.

-J

From The Beat: It's really great that you're starting to stick up for yourself and not let other people dictate who you are or define you. People talk and will always talk, but how you react to that is what really what determines who you are as a person.

Bad Influences

Whats good Beat, I'm writin' about one of the topics tonight.

I think that I am a bad influence to some of my younger family members. I am a bad influence because I am in a gang and I lead my little cousin into that kind of stuff and he ended up getting stabbed. When that happened I was hella mad! My cousin was only a young teen, luckily he didn't die.

-Full Of Regret

From The Beat: That's a pretty scary thing to have happen, of course you were angry. Do you think there's anything you can do to get your cousin out? Do you think if you got out, that he would follow?

Value Your Life

We should value our life.
 We should have the utmost respect and care for our mind, body and heart.
 We should value our life because once it's gone we don't want to go down that road of destruction and misinterpretation.
 Value your life because it's the only thing you should cherish.
 Value others also because they're the ones that have your back
 if you're ever in a situation.
 Value a life, your life, it's the best way to have order.

-Nayashade

From The Beat: If everyone valued each other's lives as much as you do, there would be no violence or war. We can only hope that someday people feel the same way about life as you do.

Feel Justice In Your Heart

Self-esteem, love, pride and dignity, everyone should value life.

Why does it seem like murder is the first thing that comes to young people/adult minds in today's society?

They should feel justice in their hearts instead of seeking revenge because it does nothing but make the streets unsafe for everyone.

-Rosevette

From The Beat: You make an important point – violence often comes from a place of revenge, not justice. Lots of people justify violence by saying it's for justice, but revenge and justice are two very different things.

Life in Jail

I think the cop should get life in jail. Why I think he should get life because us we get time in jail for some stupid shhh. People get strikes for robberies and do some time. So why white cousin don't get time?

-Goofy

From The Beat: We do agree justice shouldn't be racially biased. We wonder why you decided life in jail would be the appropriate sentence?

First Impression

Let me tell you 'bout my first
Impression of you baby
You was the apple of my eye that
Drove me crazy
I got to know you better over time
And I got to admit you was more than a dime
A beautiful thang like you comes
Once in a blue moon
I'm feeling pain now but we'll meet again pretty soon
And you'll bring me that joy that I once felt
Like ice cream on a hot day you made me melt
I would say it was love at first sight
But I didn't know what love was 'til the first night
We kicked it and our lips connected
Your passion had me well protected
Had me feeling like a queen with no crown
And you were my king that was truly down
I'm down for you and I love you genuinely
If you could only truly see
My feelings and my thoughts deep inside
Then you'd understand that I'm here to ride
I want you to know that you are a blessin'
And I peeped that since my first impression

-Sadie

From The Beat: Sounds like you really care about your boyfriend. Your letters and poems back and forth are a great way to stay connected while you're in the hall. Keep up the great writing!

Q-Vole Beat

Today I'm going to write about brutally honest people. Well me I would want anybody not just my family to tell me what they really thought about me because that's how I am, and I think it helps you improve.

That's why I thank my mom and my brother because they are the most honest people I know. Pues orale.

-Gilberto

From The Beat: We agree that it's easier to make the right decisions when everything's on the table, and you know what you're working with. Your lucky these people are in your family. How are you at saying what you really think?

Took the Rap

I was a bad influence on one of my homies, we were going around hitting licks and I told one of my homies to go do something and he did it. I was the leader it was a lot of people with us after I told him what to do with other people as watch outs 5-0 came.

I got out of there, the rest of them got caught, one of the girls snitched on me but my friend I had bad influences on took the rap.

I don't have any feelings about it because they followed me, I didn't force them, I didn't put a gun to their head. But still I was a bad influence. But I aint tripping I'm down right now but I swear I'm gonna bounce back.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: Everybody is responsible for their own choices, however we have a lot of power with what we bring to others. How's your relationship with your friend who took the rap?

Why

As the days pass by
I wonder why my young
People gotta die.
Why we always committing crimes.
Yea I know we all wanna shine
But it aint worth doin a long period of time.
Damn I should be at home
With my baby, comforting her when she cry.
No one under stands why I don't need no man.
I can do it by myself.
Comes to find out its hard and I'm afraid to
Ask for help.

-Tyrell's Wifey

From The Beat: A lot of people have trouble asking for help because they think it shows weakness. A better way to look at it though, is it takes courage to swallow your pride and do what's best. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it, it shows maturity and growth.

Don't Wish Jail Upon any Man

The reason I think this story got more attention was because the boy was in handcuffs. And a police officer shot him when he had no reason to shoot him. He was handcuffed so he couldn't possibly be harm to anyone.

Another reason I think this story got more attention is because the officer was white and the boy was black, if the boy was white the officer would have been put in jail. I don't wish jail upon any man so let that man off easy.

-Limit

From The Beat: It's interesting that you seem to think the officer was guilty, yet unlike so many who agree with you—don't think punishing him is the answer.

Always Wanted To Do

One thing I've always wanted to do is play football and be somebody, like go the right way not the wrong way, because if you go that way you could be killed or in jail for life. So when I get out I am gone do right and do my program and be somebody good and be at the house with my girl and make her happy and it gone take me a minute so I got to do it step by step.

-Phillip

From The Beat: That's exactly right – just take it step by step. Step one – figure out what the steps are! Going to school every day? Getting a job? Let us know what's next.

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

Well honestly I feel my family would try to encourage me to be a better person. My family knows I'm a great person and will do all they can to try and help me. My family knows me probably better than I do.

I listen but at the same time the more I try to help myself the further down I put myself. I feel I need a better life. I love my life, I want my life, but when I think of my life it feels as if it's slipping right away from me. I know my family loves me so when I'm released my only focus is my life so look for me on the basketball court of the WNBA.

-The Grudge

From The Beat: You know you've got it in you - don't let your goals slip out of your grasp. It's all about priorities. If you worry too much about what your peers are doing for example, your focus shifts away from your goals and it's easy to lose them. Keep your focus where it needs to be, and you'll get there.

Don't Want To Hear It

Honestly I wouldn't want to hear something I don't want to hear. Like, some of my family members be telling me that "you aint gonna ever do right." And that they don't trust me when I'm at their house. They think that because I caught a robbery case once, and went down for a stolo, that I'm going to steal from them.

I did it once from one of my aunties. I did it because every time I ask her for something, she will lie and say she don't got it, even though I seen it with my own eyes and she seen me. So that made me mad, because all you got to do is say no.

That's why I don't really want anybody to tell me nothing because I know it will always be negative and I don't got time for haters.

That's it for now, but I'll talk to y'all later. And for all, keep your head up.

-Loony

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that you are constantly getting such negative feedback from your family. It sounds like you are caught in a cycle of mistrust—you don't trust that they are truthful, and vice versa. What do you think you can do to help win their trust back, and break this cycle?

Incarcerated

What's up. This is Stev-o from Hayward. I'm locked up. I've been locked up for a minute. I been here Christmas, New Year's and I'm about to be here for my b-day.

If any one gets locked up, you gotta stay strong and keep your head up or it makes your time here worse.

- Steve-o

From The Beat: Happy Birthday Steve-o! We know that some days it's easier than others to stay strong and keep your head up and we wish you extra strength on those harder days.

Keep My Head High

What's good. It's Mousie from Livemore. Once again up in The Beat pages. I'm up in the unit holdin' it down solid. Mom's hella sick. Sicker than ever. And I got a baby on the way with my one an' only mi amor Mariana. It's hella stressful but gotta keep my head up high.

Judge probably gonna make me do four months hall time 'till I turn 18. But, when I get out it's a new beginning.

- Mousie

From The Beat: Can you tell us a bit more about the new beginning you are planning? What's your plan? What's the first step? Who are you asking to help?

My Mind

This juvenile hall is getting to my mind/didn't do the crime but gotta do the time. These ninjas in aint nothing but talk/ they speak a good game, but can't walk the walk/ I gotta do this time and not let it do me/ cause if I do then Ima go crazy/ I go to court Friday to see what they say/ I aint even tripping because Ima be out one day.

-Lil Rolo

From The Beat: What can you do to keep your mind well everyday? You are forced to learn some methods of coping, and if you can figure out what works well for you....reading and writing, meditation, exercise, etc. it can help you all through life.

My Dream

One thing I always wanted to do was start my own business. The business I wanted to start was an auto-mechanic business. Because I enjoy working on cars. I first started to enjoy cars when my dad had me help him with his last year. Then he took me to an auto-mechanic school he went to. He showed me how to use some of the tools that were there. I enjoyed it a lot.

When I moved back to Oakland with my mom I tried to find a school that could assist me in my goal but I only found two and they are too far.

- Eleven

From The Beat: This is a great dream that can come true. Keep trying to find a school. The College of Alameda has automobile technology classes. They also have classes about running a small business. And if you are not quite ready for college, they can help with that too. Let us know if you want more info!

It's All Just Statistics

To me everyone's life is the same, and I think everyone should be treated the same. To me my life is worth more than anyone else's, because it's my life and I wouldn't lose it for no one except my close friends and my family.

I think the BART killing was a big deal because of the situation and who killed him. Because the dude wasn't doing anything and he was unarmed and the cop shot him in point blank range. OK then that I think everyone's lives are worth the same and every one is equal, and should have equal rights. I think most people that are killed just become a statistic at the end of me year... It's just because there is so much killing going on now days.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: Maybe to the outside world it's statistics, but to the people who lose their loved ones, it's so much more than statistics: It's dreams ended, lives cut down, terrible grief. Thanks for reminding us of the people behind the numbers - peace.

Another Death

Police killing folks-keep it real what's going on? The cracker shot him for no reason he didn't do shhh wrong
How you gone shoot a man when he stuck on the ground
Just for that reason we throwing riots and damaging towns
Another death in Oakland that's another dead folk
And that's why we mess up cars cause this shhh aint a joke
Now that's making people hot wanting to be out
Ima have faith in this case and make sure
I stay away from cops when I be out

-Young Arco

From The Beat: Always a good idea to have no reason to interact with police. You never want to find out what might happen if it was you...

I Have A Dream, Too

Today us, the United States, made history 1-20-09

We just experienced our new African American president of the U.S. That's what we've all been waiting for.

I have a dream that one day I go to court and get a release and go back home to my family. I know they are missin' me just as much as I'm missing them.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: This dream WILL come true one day, either sooner or later. So now all you need to do is come up with a plan for what comes next. What's your plan?

True Love

"True love last through time, space and distance. It only grows deeper and more powerful."

-Terry Woods, Author: True to the Game

"Behind every great man there's at least two great women." This is a quote that Mrs. Butler told me.

-Author, Unknown

"The reason why I like these two quotes is because it makes me think of home and who I miss..."my family"

-Elton

From The Beat: This are both terrific quotes. Tell us more about the 'true loves' in your life, and what steps you are taking to make sure that time, space, and distance can never keep you too far apart!

Change In Directions

This shhh getting deeper and the money comin fast
Makin' ten racks a day now that's a whole lot of cash
The feds lookin' for me but I ain't really trippin'
I keep my hands clean so the kid never slippin'
Coogi fit on plus the Creatives on my feet
It's haters all around me so all around me we got heat
I go to the traphouse just to collect a lil' dough
I'm the boss in the hood so what I say go

The whole time they watchin' but I ain't really knowin'
I sit down on the couch light the weed and start blowin'
I'm too smart for this I'm ten yards strong
I thought they would never catch me but I guess I thought wrong

They kick in the door hangs up nobody move
I sit there like damn why the kid gotta lose
I keep smoking my blunt as they cuff my hands
They take the blunt out my mouth while destroying my plans

I paid for a good lawyer so everything was cool
Don't snitch if you get caught that's the number one rule
I sit down in my cell later on that day

I feel like I'm up in hell it shouldn't be that way
My lawyer said I got charged with murders plus drugs
Plus that nine piece dawg, one year for every slug
My gun held thirty so my ninja that's thirty years

Twenty-five years later I get out on appeal
but this the new side of me with the lords will
I get out and go to church instead of banging for the turf
Wake up in the morning get clean and go to work
But all my life I hated people who were teachers
One year later I set out to be a preacher
So I changed a life and turned from a boy to a man
Free us, we all gotta rest in peace

-Weezy

From The Beat: So since this piece starts out with one idea on how to live but ends up on a completely different program, tell us again, is "Don't Snitch" really the number one rule? What about Do Unto Others? Or Spread the Peace? Or Be true to yourself? We want to hear the new preachers new rules!!!

Chocolate

Chocolate, is it the color of my skin,
Chocolate, is it the richness I can't win,
Chocolate, the dark shining so bright,
Chocolate, oh isn't she a sight,
Chocolate, oh that coco brown,
Chocolate, makes me fall to the ground,
Chocolate, chocolate, oh that chocolate girl
chocolate

You are my world.

-Ralene

From The Beat: Just in time for Valentine's day, a chocolate heart of a poem...Keep them coming!

Restricted For A Month

What's up with The Beat, it's yo' boy Kash Money from Oakland and I'm still here

in camp doing this crappy time. I'm mad because I'm restricted for a month so I ain't going home, but I ain't really tripping, cause I'ma be here with my ninja Lil Bin Laden hahaha yea that's my ninja. The reason why I'm restricted is because I got in two fights. I ma missed my girl this whole month, but oh well it be like this sometimes, so I ain't tripping.

I'm just glad that the day when I go home is my birthday and I'ma kick it

in my varrio and with my familia I'm just gonna have fun with all my homies. Well I hope this time goes fast and hopefully I get released. from camp in March and go back to my familia and change for my madrecita. Well peace and one last thing "I love my baby Jessica"

-Kash Money

From The Beat: We've really enjoyed your positive energy and style in workshops - but TWO FIGHTS? That leaves us wondering what it's going to be like for you when you get out, because if you're finding drama at camp, what's to keep you from finding drama out there? On the other hand, maybe you think it'll be easier once you are with your family? Let us know.

Last Piece

I go to court tomorrow January 21st.

Hopefully I won't be seeing this in The Beat. But for all the people who in low spirits keep ya' head up God got you all. Jail is a place I could never see myself again and for all the little ninjas who think jail cool, it ain't.

When I get out I'm gonna be a positive role model for my little ninjas in my hood. Show 'em a different way, even me not coming back to jail a be a positive thing for them seeing that I thought jail wasn't cool. Seeing me in school and at least making a effort to get straight.

-Lil' Fred

From The Beat: We saw you last week which means you are still in the Hall? We hope you didn't get bad news, but still, we hope that no matter what the news was, you still keep up the good attitude you show in The Beat.

Stressed

This be Mousie from Livermore up in these pages again. Locked down in these east bay county walls. I'm just maintaining solid and taking it day by day feel me. I'm missing moms (she ain't in the best health) and my lady Mariana. I'm stressed out the box homey.

-Mousie

From The Beat: First off, welcome back - not to the system but to our pages, we always like to read your writing. Second, we're sorry to hear about your mom, and your overall stress. Will you write up a piece telling us all what you've been going through?

Hate

I hate being institutionalized in my room. Because it feels like I'm an animal. When I get out I'm staying out. I know I said that a dozen times but I'm really not coming back because I'm going to be 18 when I get out.

- Rick

From The Beat: We know you know that turning eighteen just means you won't go back to juvie, but turning eighteen won't keep you out of jail. What will keep you out of jail, frankly, is not doing anything illegal. Have you got a plan for that? We'd love to hear about it.

Dodge Boi

I'm Lil' Huesos. I'm back in here for a violation. Last time they let me out on E.M. I pimped the E.M. then I started screwing up.... Smokin' grapes, poppin' pills and snorting coke, kickin' it with the homies, screwin' with females and lookin' for funk.

Then my PO called my mom and set up a meeting. They drug-tested me. I came up dirty and now I'm back here on my way to a group home. But you know what? Like fester would say... so whaaat!

- Lil' Huesos

From The Beat: If you really think "so what" you wouldn't have cared enough to say you started screwing up. It's great that you see where you made mistakes. You are completely capable of succeeding.

Move How I Move

My life worth it
But I'm livin' curses
It's '09 bra
Quit snatchin' purses
You ain't got it all don't mean you're worthless
(I win and I lose, that's daily)
But me always losin' just a maybe
Not even maybe don't call it gravy
Big shells in my pocket like I own the Navy
(We at war / No reason hate)
Go 'head and hate, get labeled a fake
Cheese ain't an option, I'm gonna empty the plate
(Got a future that I'm livin' or I'm livin' the future)
I'm me, you're you, then we something neutral
(Call it what you want, but I call it real)
If you ain't God's child then you here to kill
And if time is money then I made a mill.

- Lil' Jon Jon

From The Beat: You've got some great lines here. We especially like "You ain't got it all don't mean you're worthless." There seems to be two forces in this piece. One is a smart, clear vision: wins and losses are daily, when we are each real there is neutrality. And the other is an aggression: shells in the pocket, at war. Maybe we're off base. We are rooting for the smart clarity to win over the aggression, though.

Confidential

Everything in my life is confidential because any info I give up could be enough for somebody to tell on me and put me in jail forever or enough info for somebody to succeed off it. I mean, I want people to succeed but not off my info.

There is a lot of things that people don't know about someone else. Like rather somebody killed somebody or raped somebody! So choose your friends wisely and be cautious!

- Scanlous

From The Beat: We agree: "Choose your friends wisely and be cautious!" And you have every right and reason to keep your life confidential. Beat readers can learn from your life, though. Remember that you can make up a name and change details so that no one knows it's you.

Life

One thing I've always wanted to do is live my life without having to look behind me. But it seems like you can't when you live in Oakland. It's always someone out to get you. Either you got what they want or you want what they got. So you take it and begin to play the game and when you're so-called callin' yourself, that's when someone you've done wrong to comes out and ends your life.

-man-man

From The Beat: There are other ways to live. We know they are not always easy to see. You can find ways to get what you want without taking them from someone else. We believe in you. It takes steps, though. Steps like school and work and staying safe one day at a time.

Hood Influences

When I was little, like 5 year old, I was influenced by the hood. My friends in the hood taught me how to survive, and how to make money.

Me, I try to give my brothers and sisters guidance that I didn't have to help give them a better life, but now I'm not 'cause I'm locked up. If they try to follow me when I get out I will show them a better way while they are still young.

-Lamont

From The Beat: What will you tell these young people about juvenile hall, once you get out? And if you will you be "showing them" a better way through your own actions, then how will your actions be different once you get out?

The Police

First off I wanna say -- the police. They just are just racist especially them Livermore cops. When I get pulled over and they hear my name I get searched. I guess it's because I'm Afghan they be saying hella racist shhh to me and they all be slappin that country and rock shhh.

That Bart police that shot that one person should be locked up for twenty five and a L.

-Pashtun

From The Beat: Someone else wrote that they hate jail so much they don't wish time on anyone...and you write that he should do 25 to life. Other's would get that sentence, it's true--however we wonder what you think would help this situation? What if he really learned something and traveled around training police on wrongful shootings? What if his sentence was to travel the world on foot with no money? What would he learn, what could he teach, how could this all not just be a terrific waste of two lives, and a tragedy?

The Trust Hurts

All my friends and family know I'm a rebel to society. But they keep it to themselves whenever they hangin' out with me.

Destroyed my parents trust when they really did believe in me.

But actually,

I never thought I'd become a detainee.

Doing heavy time,

You just wanna scream, Free Me!

Haven't been to school in two years,

Just jokin' round' and drinkin' beer,

Smokin' weed and now I'm here.

But it was my fault from the beginning,

A selfishly made decision.

- Lito

From The Beat: You seem very clear, Lito. It's not too late to do the school. It's not too late to stop joking and drinking and smoking either. Well, we hope you don't completely stop joking around. Fun can be had that doesn't hurt anyone (including yourself) and that doesn't interfere with your goals. We're thinking that it's probably not too late with your family, either. You've taken the first steps for change. What's next?

I've Always Wanted to Raise My Family

I really don't know what they would say about me. I think that it depends on who is going to talk from my family.

One thing I've always wanted to do is to raise my family like get married and have at least one kid. And also not get in trouble anymore.

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: Sometimes keeping your goal in mind will help you make decisions that are good for you in the long run—instead of what seems like the good idea in the moment. Having the responsibility of a family who love and need you is great, and can make what you truly value in life very clear.

Confession Dedicated to You Snitches

I ain't got to lie.

My freedom means the world me.
but dying a real ninja means a little more.
That's why I don't mess with y'all cowards
'cause we ain't built the same.

Forget the rest.

I don't see how y'all telling on homeboys y'all grow up with.

Homeboys you slept on their couch and shot marbles with.

Can't you see breaking up family,
takin' father away from their kids and I could never respect that, homie.

So if you tellin', don't even holla at me. I'm telling you, boy.

o all the real cats that are down, wish I could help y'all smile.

Keep ya'll heads up and thank God you still living and you be alright.

- Lil' Sani

From The Beat: We seem to be missing a step in your logic, Lil Sani. Are you saying that snitching can cause men to be taken away from their families by putting them in jail? Isn't there (usually) some action to snitch about before people snitch? Why is the snitching to blame for going to jail and not the illegal action? If your being a 'real ninja' puts you in jail or kills you doesn't that take you away from your family? Can you avoid that by not doing the things that land you in jail and by not walking so purposefully into a ninja death? We know it's not easy. But we've seen that it's easier when you first recognize the parts you play in your own problems. And we and your family want you safe and free!

Open Everybody's Eyes

You only get one life to live and his is gone, he's not coming back. I wanna live my life to the fullest. This should open up everybody's eyes to be careful and the police aren't coo no matter what color the police officer is. It's sick in these streets nowadays.

-Marv

From The Beat: You're right. We had to edit your RIP's, and mean no disrespect...when you want to write an RIP, write a whole piece about your friend as a dedication.

A Bad Influence With My Girl When Under The Influence

There have been many times when I have been a bad influence on my family and girlfriend. One time I was sipping syrup, meth and codeine. I let my girl get some and she was nodding off and fell asleep. She liked the syrup because it tasted like grapes. I really did not want to let her, but I was under the upper influence of the drug.

-Savage

From The Beat: How did this experience impact your girlfriend? Would you ever introduce these drugs to someone again? And what about cleaning yourself up? Drugs will bury you.

The Value Of One Life

The reason I think the murder the police did at the BART station is different from any other, because the police supposed to be protecting us but instead they made it worse. But that's all I'ma speak on.

-Aj

From The Beat: Have you ever been in a situation when the police protected you from danger? Or to put it the other way, when the police were SUPPOSED to be protecting you but instead they put you in danger?

Appreciation

I have appreciation for everything I have and things that I do. I don't know about none of them, but I never undervalue any person.

Every man is valued in this world as he shows by his conduct that he wishes to be valued and ya'll might not understand but one of two, here and there, have the blended passion and understanding.

Oh yea and one thing for ya'll keep in mind is next to excellence is appreciation.

-Lil' Dele

From The Beat: Who are some of the people in your life who DO have both passion and understanding? What have they taught you, what kinds of examples have they set?

Gangs in Oakland

Gangs gangbanging in Oakland is like a roach. it ain't going to ever stop. If you ain't banging a gang, you banging where you from and what part.

Me I'm in a gang. I bang where I'm from and it's like if you don't bang, then there's something wrong about you. Just about everybody I know bang.

But banging you can eventually grow out of it if you get enough of it. But me I'm not ready to give it up right now.

-Trevor

From The Beat: Do you remember how you first hooked up with the gang? What did your family think when you started running the streets? What are some of the benefits of banging? On the other other hand, what are the problems?

I Pray I Get Haters

Man I pray I get haters
'Cause they money motivator
And I am trying to see 100 stacks
This is my life, this ain't no raps
I need some six's for the summer
So if you a hater take down my number
Bring me my rims so I can slap 'em on that hummer
You haters make it rain, ninja I make it thunder
Over the few months I got a lot of mo haters
Now I am sitting on eights
Its just me and Bill Gates
Cruising the interstates
Blowing off the pound of grapes
So if you hating and you know it clap your hands
Get my attention while you in the stands
Causing I am on stage pleasing my fans
Before I go to sleep I pray to God he send
Me some haters so I can get the Stacy Adams
To go with my gators.

-Stan Da Man

From The Beat: Interesting piece but instead of focusing on negative things how about focusing on something like exercise! Hit a couple sit ups because havin' some Stacy Adams n gators are no good if you can't fit into them.

Release!

Well I'm up here at camp. Just doin' the same ol' shhh I been doin' the same shhh for the last six months.

I should be getting out either late February or the first second week of March. I'm gonna be mad if I don't get released. I didn't go home this weekend because I only had a

Twelve hour and since I'm gold badge I don't leave this camp thang unless I leave on Friday and come back Monday or Sunday you know, nothing but the rest. RIP Yogi

-Wino

From The Beat: When you get out, you'll be six months older, and, we hope, six months wiser. It's part of what it means to be human, right? We grow and we learn. So what have you learned up at camp, and is any of what you learned useful to you, so that when you get you can STAY out?

Real Mad

I hate the fact that I came back to jail this is my fifth time here and I just barely got out November 4, 2008 and only was out for a month or two.

I got caught with some heroin that I found and now I'm back in here and the judge said I might be in here for some time but I'ma see when I get sentenced.

I wish I never got caught but I was just tryin' to make some money to get something to eat and to get high. But I got caught and the police told me if I ran they would pull out my dreads. So I didn't run and I didn't have time to throw the stuff out of my leather jacket so I was real mad.

-Derryck

From The Beat: We hope that this is your last time coming to the hall. Why do you think you found yourself wanting to get high, knowing that you just got out of juvie? If getting high brings you to the hall, then why do it? There are so many other things that you could have been doing at the time! We hope that this time you'll learn from your past mistakes instead of repeating them.

I Hate Jail

One thing I want to do right now is get out of jail because it's boring in here. I'm gonna make a list:

First, you stay in your room all the time, no electronics, light stay on all the time, you got a curfew, and it's boring.

I hope this will break down so no one would have to come here, it's torture.

-Lamar

From The Beat: We understand why you're bored, Lamar. No one wants to be stuck somewhere they didn't want to go in the first place, but just because you are locked up doesn't mean your mind is. Your body is confined but your mind is free, free to wander and think of anything you'd like. You have all this time to think about what you want in life, what you want for your future! Use this time away from your friends and family to really think of where you want to go in your life.

I'm The Leader!

The people I hang out with are like me, lightweight.

I think you could say I'm a bad influence to the people I hang out with, a lot of people that I hang out with follow me, they do what I do because I'm the leader of my hang so I do thangs and they follow me. I like being the leader because I used to hate following the leader, and before I was the leader.

-Young Leader

From The Beat: Before you can be a leader you have to answer the hardest question of all: Where am I Going? If you want to lead people, you have to ask whether or not you are leading them towards good things, don't you?

Get My Life Right

Today for the first time in history I witnessed a black man become president of the United States of America.

So many people would have killed to see this happen but was killed before it happened.

So my plan for 2009 is to get my life right so I won't become a statistic.

-Al

From The Beat: We love the pride and determination here. Now tell us how you plan to get your life right - because the tighter your plan the more likely you are to succeed.

Scholarship to Morehouse!

One thing I've always wanted to do is graduate from Morehouse University, with a masters in Business and Computer Tech.

I learned about Morehouse college from a organization called the 100 black man who gives our scholarships to black males. Before the end of Obama's terms, I want to meet and shake hands with Obama.

-Lovin' Obama

From The Beat: 100 Black Men, that sounds like a great organization! Where did you hear about them? What would it take for you to get to the point of earning that scholarship? Did they give you information?

Tired, and Ready to Run

Man I am getting tired of this.

I want to run again. I don't know why but oh well, if I do I do. I can't do nothin' about it. I haven't run because I really don't probably because my family and my girl. Or if it ain't that is because I want to keep it behind me. But I really don't know I might run soon. Well y'all be safe don't mess up, and stay out of trouble.

-Chucho

From The Beat: Don't run Chucho! The Beat looks for you every week, and every time we see that you're still here we breathe a sigh of relief. Because you've got too much to live for, too much to look forward to!

Work

Some of the staff here be rude just to be rude.

But the real work is putting excitement into your work, and the women or men who do not work for the love of work, but only for money are not likely to make money nor find much fun in life.

-Lil' Dele

From The Beat: Working in probation can give you a decent salary, but you'd be surprised at how many people sign up for it for one reason and one reason only: To help young people. Keep an eye out, we bet you soon find a staff member you can truly trust and learn from.

Still, I'm Alive

I'm still at this camp program. I go to court soon and I know the place don't wanna see me out. I'm gonna still do what I do. I miss my hood I've gone through a lot in my hood good times and bad times.

But still I'm alive when a lot of my homies weren't so lucky. They're either dead or doin' time, but if you real, and about what you be talkin' 'bout, you gone

ride it out and see another day.

-Boo

From The Beat: Yeah Boo, you are lucky you're still alive, with another shot at freedom, but that luck is gonna run out if you don't replace with some real thinking. The pen is full of people who were "real," and so are the graveyards. We'd hate to see you in either of these places, so what are you gonna do to turn off that road, and quick?

Crazier

I'm tired of this bootsie ass shhh and seeing the same people. Every time that door closes behind me and I'm stuck in that cell, I become crazier and more confused as each minute goes by. I am literally going crazy, mentally unstable. Hopefully I can keep it solid for 35 more days, until I get out.

- Don't Trip

From The Beat: We're sure you can keep it solid until you get out, Trip. One day at a time. When you can, you might want to try writing when you are in your cell. Just for you. Many people find journaling helps sort out their own confusion.

Do You Know Me?

My name Jon-Jon do you know me? Naw maybe
I gotta a lot of haters
'Cause I took them old lady
Just a lil' something
This not a epigram
I'm tryin' to be the next president
Yea Barack the man
Stay up out my swam
I'm gonna knock them down
It's cold blooded out here
Guard your fam

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: If your name is Jon Jon, how come you sign Lil Mike? We hope you got the right name to go with this rhyme/if not hit us up and we'll fix it next time!

Words

Words can be cheap,
words can be strong
words can get hollow tips put in yo' dome
words can be bad,
words can be good
you better watch yo' words in the hood.

-Yung Jay Bee

From The Beat: Words can lock you up/Words can set you free/Take you to the top/Or bury you at sea/Words make you win/Words make you lose/In the end/It depends/On which words you choose,

Somewhere You Don't Want To Be

What's good with it? It's Lil' Ghost from Livermore. You know, I'm in here for attempted murder, battery, and robbery.

The hall is somewhere you don't want to be and I don't like it one bit. I miss my family and first of all I think I am going to get accused for something I didn't do. That's the sorry thing about being in here. And I can't blame it on the people I was with because I was there too.

- Randy

From The Beat: We'd like to advise you to just be honest. And then when you get out, maybe you'll need to make some hard choices about who you hang out with to make sure you don't come back to the hall. You can do it.

Responsibility

I feel that the value of every life is equal, but I feel that some people have more responsibility..

- Narco

From The Beat: Narco, we know you didn't finish this. We are very intrigued, though, by this one sentence and hope you will continue to explain this thought. Which people have more responsibility? And what kinds of responsibility?

RIP Skill Mike

Man you know that's messed up
How they did my big homie
Man they hit my ninja up they can't even do nothing
He just broke a fight up next thang you know he's getting
picked up
Don't trip I got yo' fam yo' mama and my grams.

-Dre

From The Beat: What at tragedy. We're sorry your boy got caught up - have you got an update for us? Is his family doing OK? We're glad to hear you're thinking of them.

Famous Rapper

I always wanted to be a famous rapper. I think I got a lot of potential I really think I could make it, but it would take a long time, just because I'm in the Bay Area and it's not enough promotion like the south.

I would have been made the rap business if I was in the south.

-Jamal

From The Beat: You say there's not enough promotion, but what about Too \$hort, E-40, The Coup, Silk-E, Digital Underground, Tone-Loc, and all the other local rappers who got out there and made their names known? Maybe it's up to you and the next generation to rebuild promotional powers and get our local talent seen and heard!

I Follow Bad Influence... but not Anymore

Bad influence.... that's not me.

See me, I like giving good influences, but I follow bad influence, I don't know why I do but I do. I try to go on the straight path, but it's hard. But I promise myself to forget about that bad influence.

I'm all about good influence and to make my mama proud and get her out of the hood, and that's all good influence on my whole family.

-Charles

From The Beat: Who are some of the people who have been the BEST influences on you? Who are the other positive people in your life? Do you have positive peers? Coaches? Teachers? Cousins?

Camp Is Better Than the Hall

Wassup Beat, this is ya boy Festy. I'm up in this camp thang, and it's hecka bootsie. But it's better then being in the hall, you feel me? It's cool...all I'm trying to do is get out this thang, but like three weeks ago a dude was killed by the police.

I don't think its no difference but that the police killed him, not another ninja but that still ain't cool but that what I got for you Beat, be cool.

-Festy

From The Beat: So are you saying that to the person killed it doesn't matter who does the killing? This is intriguing, and we'd love to hear more.

Crackin' A Beer

If I wasn't at camp I'd be out side on the block posted wit' the homeboys.

Also I'd be cracking a beer out of a thirty pack of Budweiser. That's what I'd be doin' but I can't drink now that I'm at camp.

-Drinking Problem

From The Beat: Sounds like you drank a lot out there, for real. But being locked up could turn out to be an interesting experiment, because like you said, you can't drink. So what is the difference between Drunk You and Sober You? Which one feels more pain? Which one does better at school? Which one feels more like the real you? And if you can't drink, what do you do instead?

One Thing...

One thing I've always wanted to do is go to college. I want to go to college because it would make my family proud.

When I go to college I would like to play some kind of sport. I really enjoy basketball and football so maybe if I'm good enough I can play on a team.

I would like to go to UCLA. I want to go there because it wouldn't be too far away from my house. They wouldn't like to see me move too far away, neither would I.

They and I would like to see each other as much as possible but if I played a sport for the college I would like to go pro. If I went pro I would make a lot of money to support my family.

-TJ

From The Beat: These are great goals to have for yourself, TJ! We know that you can do it but what do you have to do to make these goals a little closer to reach? One thing you can do is stay out of the hall but what would you have to change in your life to make sure you don't go back once you are out? Maybe stay home more and hang with family instead of kickin' it with the homies?

One Thing

One thing I always wanted to do is...rob a bank and get away with it because when you rob a bank, you usually come up with \$1,000,000.00 or less

And another thing is that I always wanted to stay out of jail forever and go to school!

-Francisco

From The Beat: Wouldn't it be more satisfying if you earned that \$1,000,000.00 on your own? Robbing a bank isn't such a smart move to make and you'll only end up behind bars, how will the money help then? The other two things you always wanted to do are possible and actually pretty easy, as long as you really want it. What can you do on your part to stay out of juvie and stay in school?

Bad influences

A while ago on New Years my close friend didn't want to smoke and I kept saying just do it because it's New Years and he didn't want to but I convinced him to and we went to my other bra house and we smoked.

Now, he started smoking again, now he relapsed.

-Dominic

From The Beat: Why do you think you pressured your friend to smoke that day? Do you feel badly now that your friend has relapsed and started smoking again? If you could do things differently that day, would you? We all influence our friends to join us in doing something we know is wrong, it's so we're not alone in what we're doing. Do you think this is why you asked him to smoke with you that day? It isn't too late to try and change things, you could write to your friend and tell him that you made a mistake that day.

Bad Influences

When I was about eleven and my friend was nine, we used to smoke weed and break car windows and ride off on our bikes and go to another block and do the same thing.

I never thought I was a bad influence until now that I'm a young teen. I should have never hung out with him because he just got out today. I think that if I never hung out with older people and he saw that he would never went to the hall.

-RoShawn

From The Beat: Our friends can be a bad influence to an extent but in the end we make our own decisions. Once you start following your friends in their decisions and actions then it becomes harder and harder to think for yourself. We hope that you can find the voice in you to change, RoShawn, your individual mind depends on it. Why do you think you would do these things? Did you ever think that maybe that car window you were breaking belonged to a single mom with four kids, who might not have the money to fix the broken window? Remember, our actions affect everyone around us, even strangers.

One Thing...

One thing I've always wanted to do is to become a basketball player but I messed up already.

-Dribbler

From The Beat: You don't know that yet. You might have messed up to get in the hall but you can still change your life around. You can pull yourselves out of this mess, you shouldn't give up now! If everyone gave up because of one mistake then the world wouldn't be the world it is today.

The Value of One Life

One murder could leave so much community anger because the person that gets killed probably has family members and friends that love him so much, which makes them angry.

-My thought

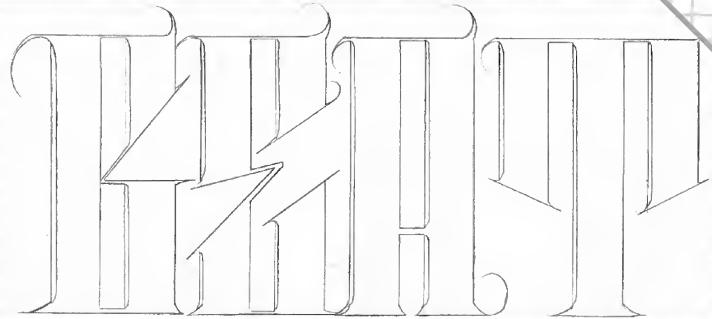
From The Beat: This is so true but why do you think people kill each other so casually knowing that they're taking someone's brother, sister, mother, or father? What do you think could be done to end the careless murders?

Bad Influences

I have led someone into doing bad things before and some of my friends led me into smoking weed. Then I have led some people into the same thing, but I know never to let any of my younger siblings into any of this.

-Awoken

From The Beat: Why would you let yourself and your friends into doing bad things but you wouldn't let any of your younger siblings do the same things you do? Why not do the same for yourself and for your friends?



One Thing...

One thing I've always wanted to do is spend time with my family together, like go on trips and places. One is to go places with each other and spend time with one another and have fun.

I've never experienced that before but when I go places by myself and walk past by restaurants and others and I see family my family together having fun. My family loves me still we spend time together at home but not other places. I want to go to places every week or something but I always stay home.

When I go places by myself just to be with my friends and hang out to have fun I end up getting in trouble. I want to go out with the family knowing I'm not going to get in to any trouble.

-Somearnn

From The Beat: Why do you think you can't hang with your friends and not get into trouble? You don't have to fight if you see your homies fighting and you don't have to steal when you see the homies stealing. Spending time with your family is always a good way to stay out of trouble but you can hang with your friends and stay out of trouble as long as you're careful and you think of what you're doing instead of just acting.

To The New Editor

What's up wit' you? I'm on ya line right now, 'cause you hop fresh on the new scene, changin' shhh. You gotta fall back an' stay in yo' place. I been doin' this Beat shhh. I know what can an' can't go in this Beat. The "f" is a cuss word, but it's part of my name, so keep it lit.

-Young Dunny CD

From The Beat: Sorry, but no can do! Actually, the "editor" you are addressing has been editing The Beat far, far longer than you've been writing in it. When we see that same letter in so many names, then we have to conclude it means more than just your name, so come up with something more original.

Bad Influences

Last year when I was at school, we were on our way to cut school to go smoke a blunt. I had influenced this one girl to come with us instead of going to class. The effect of my bad influence was that the girl lost her phone because she was high. Who knows what else could've happened to her that day?

-Donald

From The Beat: Do you feel responsible for her lost phone? What responsibility should she bear for not resisting your influence? How hard is it to say "No" when friends try to influence you to do things you know you should not do?

What Should I Do

I don't know what I should do. I am in here stressing, man. I'm ready to say to hell with it. Man, I'm ready to play ninjas. But it's cool. I'ma let them talk shhh.

-D-Rolla

From The Beat: You have to exercise maximum self-control in a place like this. Even when others provoke you to action, you're smart enough to know that the action you want to do can only hurt you more than it hurts them. Our advice: let it out on paper, and not in action.

The Devil Like He On Me!

Wha's up, Beat? This ya boy, C-B, from that black hole. I'm not for real, 'cause it feel like God ain't been helpin' me lately. I'm gettin' held down, and now I feel like the devil on me and he takin' over, for real. It's like I'm livin' in hell, 'cause I know God ain't doin' this to me. And when I said I feel like "The devil like he on me," I mean that ain't nothin' but bad things is happenin' and I'm ready to ball out.

Example: like every time I try to turn my life around, it feels like the devil wins and brings me down. I want to set myself up to go to college. I'm gone.

-CB

From The Beat: It's a terrible feeling to believe that God is letting you down. But maybe what you think is the devil is just you, not heeding God's prayers to you. (Oh yes, prayer works in both directions!) Sometimes in all our lives, we cannot make the changes we want on our own. We have to reach out and ask for help — human help. That can be a hard thing to do, but necessary. Have you asked for help? There are programs, like "Project Rebound" at San Francisco State College, that help incarcerated young people to get into college. When you get out, you should check it out.

Obama

Obama is a man who is a President that everybody can't wait until his White House entry. But to me, I think there's not gone be no difference with a black man as President than a white man.

-Yung Von

From The Beat: What are the differences you would like to see from the new President? He has said that change will only come if we also change. Are you up to that task?

What I'm Going To Do

What s'up? I'm going to let y'all know what I'm going to do when I get out. I'm going to go to school, get a job, stay on the street. I'm going to keep myself out of trouble, and keep chillin' with the homies.

-God Ali

From The Beat: The most important thing you promise to do is go to school. School is the foundation for your life's success, so we hope you keep this promise!

Son Of A Hustla

Lil' Goo is a real young goon and a son of a hustla. But that ain't nothin' to brag about, 'cause I don't live off my pop's name. He In a whole 'notha category than me. I'm Lil' Goobang. Ma goons about money and murder.

Him and his goons just 'bout money I don't mess with that ninja no way.

-Lil' Goo

From The Beat: If you stay down for money and murder, one day your own son will be writing about you, "I don't mess with that ninja no way...."

The Right Stuff

You is mad or you is happy? I am mad for doin' the wrong stuff. I want to do the right stuff, but Dante is doin' better, made the right stuff. But you is doin' okay. The time is 5:15 to 6:00. This is by Dante.

-Dante

From The Beat: What is the wrong stuff, Dante? What is the right stuff? What will you stop doing when you get out? What will you start doing?

My Girl

What's up Beat? I'm going to write about my ruka (girt). Bueno, mi ruka she is hella cool with me and she help me when I need help. Right now ella mi estaba apoyando (she was my support), first 'cause she left me now for some problems happened. But I'm sad 'cause she is pregnant, and now she left me 'cause I told her that I don't want to nobody que sufre por mi culpa (to suffer for my guilt).

Just 'cause I locked up, I think ellos sientes lastima por mi (she feels sad for me). So that make me feel messed up 'cause I don't want nobody to feel lastima por mi. But my ruka, she still send me letters, but I don't want to know about her.

Bueno, pues, this vato is out. Alrato.

-Duende

From The Beat: When you're as young as you are, you should have many different girlfriends, and she should have many different boyfriends. The saddest part of this story — besides the fact that you're locked up — is that you were both too young to bring another life into this world before you were able to care for yourselves like adults. She didn't leave you until you left her... by coming here!

The One An' Only Yuka

Hey, Beat, it's hard to believe, but I'm lightweight kinda feelin' coo' tonight 'cause I'm gettin' a family visit with my moms and the one an' only. You know, the one

I fall 'sleep thinkin' 'bout, the one I dream 'bout, the one that showed me a new meaning. I think she the one! I hope she the one. I can't see her bein' two or three. I just hope she feel the same 'bout me

-Lil' Unlucky

From The Beat: We hope she is everything you hope she is. If so, you'll have to change your name to Lil' Lucky. Of course, the only way you'll find out is by getting out and staying out.

Bleep The World!

What's up Beat? Forget you, world!
 I am all about money, but I love yo' girl
 When she pushing herself to better my wealth
 Better myself
 I try, but every time I bend the block
 I staring death in the eye
 That why I stay with my fire
 In the city anywhere you go you can find murder for hive
 But cha can know when they comin' you keep ya ear to
 the wire Every time them crackers see me they bringing
 up my priors
 So I am like, "To hell with it! I'ma thug it out on a pill
 I be bugging out...
 Mess around I'ma show you what I am all about

-What Are You Smokin'

From The Beat: We had to take some of your words, and even a line or two out, because they aren't Beat appropriate. As for your threats against the world, where they have led you so far? Your strategy doesn't seem to be working for you. You may love those females, but what good does it do you if you keep putting yourself exclusively in the company of males?

I Wished You Loved Me

I wished you loved me...
 How can someone make me so sad
 But still I only want them to stay?
 I wanna say I love you so bad
 But I don't wanna scare you away...
 Please understand that I'm your friend
 But I wanna be
 More than just a friend...
 I wished you loved me...

Now if ya really, really love somebody
 And I mean really, really, really
 Really love somebody...
 Let me here ya say, "Yeah yeah..."
 Let me here ya say, "Yeah eyeahee..."
 Now if ya really know ya need 'im,
 But deep down inside ya neva eva gonna leave 'im
 Let me hear ya say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah..."
 Let me hear, "Yeahe, yeahe yeah..."
 Like I wished you loved!

-Jabba

From The Beat: This first verse is so serious, but the second is not. We'd love to read a serious piece about this person you love, but who makes you so sad. If you are talking about "unrequited love," we understand why you're feeling sad. But what we don't understand is why you are not loved in return. What else can you tell us about this relationship you wish for?

Life

Man, I miss my big bruh K-G on everything. Dude taught me a lot on life, like never trust a ninja that is suspicious about cho next move. Make yo next ya bes!!
 Check this out:
 Game ova everything, man tha way I gotta go. To even think
 I might slow down, it's impossible. So think about it. How you gon
 stop a ninja that is unstoppable?
 Rest in peace K-G. Love you bruh...

-Jabba

From The Beat: An even better question is how are you gonna make a man open his eyes to the reality that he is stopped, even while he proclaims that he's unstoppable? As much as your "big bruh" taught you, it didn't prevent him from paying the biggest price of all. What price will you have to pay before you see that the course you've chosen (and that he schooled you in) is a dead end, sometimes literally?

Bad Influences

Yeah, it's this jungle boy Lando. I am staying up like a roof top. I am a jack off all trades but master none. I am a con-artist, liar, and thief. I am pimping like never before yay...

But now it's time to step the game up. Get money the best way possible. You gotta have two ways to do things. For example get a job and do ya thang.

-Orlando

From The Beat: You forgot one "trade" you're mastering right now — that of prisoner! If one of the two ways you do things leads to places like this, it doesn't much matter what the other way is, ya dig!

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 I am all about money, but I love yo' girl
 When she pushing herself to better my wealth
 Better myself
 I try, but every time I bend the block
 I staring death in the eye
 That why I stay with my fire
 In the city anywhere you go you can find murder for hive
 But cha can know when they comin' you keep ya ear to
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 So I am like, "To hell with it! I'ma thug it out on a pill
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A Nightmare To Share

What's up with The Beat? Let me holla at y'all for a min on some real shhh, B. My ninja going to kangaroo court. I witnessed the whole thing. Now that's a nightmare to share with the whole team.

They gave him 90-to-life. He weigh a buck .05, too tiny to fight. He told me, "If you ain't got no plan when you get out, you plan to come back," and not to think that can't be you.

He said them ninjas that you think yo' homeboy really ain't. They done turned cookie on 'em. And the females that said that they gon be there for him don't answer the phone no more or write back...

-Rocket

From The Beat: So, what lessons have you drawn from this nightmare? If you've truly learned that not to have a plan is the same as giving someone else the power to plan your life, what is your plan for creating a different future than your past?

I Wished You Loved Me

I wished you loved me...
 How can someone make me so sad
 But still I only want them to stay?
 I wanna say I love you so bad
 But I don't wanna scare you away...
 Please understand that I'm your friend
 But I wanna be
 More than just a friend...
 I wished you loved me...

Now if ya really, really love somebody
 And I mean really, really, really
 Really love somebody...
 Let me here ya say, "Yeah yeah..."
 Let me here ya say, "Yeah eyeah..."
 Now if ya really know ya need 'im,
 But deep down inside ya neva eva gonna leave 'im
 Let me hear ya say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah..."
 Let me hear, "Yeahe, yeahe yeah..."
 Like I wished you loved!

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Bad Influences

Wha's up with The Beat, mayne? I been a bad influence to a couple of people, yamsayin. I remember one time I was gonna rob some ninjas wit' some of my ninjas, and I had told my cousin to come wit' us. He was like, "Naw. What if we get caught?" I was like, "Man, you a sucka! Jus' come wit' us."

Then he was like, "A'ight, but if cops come, I'ma say I'm not wit' cha," and I said a'ight. Then he came wit' us. All of us had grabbed Ipods, PSP's, Iphones, and laptops. I told him we wasn't gonna give 'im money out our shhh. Then he got mad and robbed some ninja for a Iphone and he sold it for 200 dollars. He was happy 'cause it quick money. Now he jus' stuck on robbin' ninjas when he need money.

-Jerry Geez

From The Beat: So, what you're really saying is that you have influenced your cousin to be a predator who will, of course, find himself locked behind bars for what he's doing. It's just a matter of time. What you didn't tell us is how you feel about dragging your cousin into this world of "quick money" and the end of freedom...

Think Twice

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-Chuck

From The Beat: Anybody who gets locked up wasn't "ready" for the game. Nobody is ever ready, and anyone — from the biggest shot caller to the lowest soldier — can pay with his life, one way or another. Look around at your surroundings. The advice to "think twice" about this life is good... only, it should be applied to yourself.

Here I Am

Man, wha's up with The Beat like dawgy. I'm back in this dungeon once again, dawgy, but it's coo' though. I ain't worried like I should be 'cause right about now, I don't know what they hollerin' 'bout me.

But ay, though, it's coo'. I'm holdin' this thang down 'til I get released in a few.

-Shady Boy Jabba

From The Beat: You're not worried because you're getting out soon, but the beginning of this piece tells it all: "I'm back..." So, what will be different this time?

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One Thing I Always Wanted To Do

One thing I always wanted to do is be a positive influence on other people's lives. I'm tired of using marijuana because all it does is lead me to back to trouble, and I end up back in juvie.

-Donald

From The Beat: This is a perfect example of why we want you to write about just one topic per workshop. We love that you want to be a positive influence, but you could have expanded this so much more.

Killing Is Wrong

Life is precious and should not be wasted. That's how I feel about the value of life. I feel that everybody's life status is different. Killing is wrong and should not be accepted.

-Dow Jones

From The Beat: We agree with your conclusion, DJ, but we wish you'd spend a little more time telling us about the thinking that led you to it.

Bad Influences

Wha's up with The Beat, mayne? I been a bad influence to a couple of people, yamsayin. I remember one time I was gonna rob some ninjas wit' some of my ninjas, and I had told my cousin to come wit' us. He was like, "Naw. What if we get caught?" I was like, "Man, you a sucka! Jus' come wit' us."

Then he was like, "A'ight, but if cops come, I'ma say I'm not wit' cha," and I said a'ight. Then he came wit' us. All of us had grabbed Ipods, PSP's, Iphones, and laptops. I told him we wasn't gonna give 'im money out our shhh. Then he got mad and robbed some ninja for a Iphone and he sold it for 200 dollars. He was happy 'cause it quick money. Now he jus' stuck on robbin' ninjas when he need money.

-Jerry Geez

From The Beat: So, what you're really saying is that you have influenced your cousin to be a predator who will, of course, find himself locked behind bars for what he's doing. It's just a matter of time. What you didn't tell us is how you feel about dragging your cousin into this world of "quick money" and the end of freedom...

Day By Day Is The System

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy Young Low holdin' it down for the thug, ya dig? But what's good with the real goons reading this? Man, you know, taking this day by day, that's all it is to this jail system, dawg. All you gotta do is keep ya head above water and stay focused 'cause they can't hold a real ninja forever. Believe that, dawg but stay up, dawg!

-Young Low

From The Beat: We know too much to believe the childish nonsense that "they can't hold a real ninja forever," and we hope you wake up to that fact before you learn it the hard way. "They" most definitely CAN hold you forever if you give them the opportunity. If not, how do explain the 2,000 children in this country (who committed crimes before the age of 18) now serving "Life in Prison Without the Possibility of Parole"?

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A Nightmare To Share

What's up with The Beat? Let me holla at y'all for a min on some real shhh, B. My ninja going to kangaroo court. I witnessed the whole thing. Now that's a nightmare to share with the whole team.

They gave him 90-to-life. He weigh a buck .05, too tiny to fight. He told me, "If you ain't got no plan when you get out, you plan to come back," and not to think that can't be you.

He said them ninjas that you think yo' homeboy really ain't. They done turned cookie on 'em. And the females that said that they gon be there for him don't answer the phone no more or write back...

-Rocket

From The Beat: So, what lessons have you drawn from this nightmare? If you've truly learned that not to have a plan is the same as giving someone else the power to plan your life, what is your plan for creating a different future than your past?

Life

Man, I miss my big bruh K-G on everything. Dude taught me a lot on life, like never trust a ninja that is suspicious about cho next move. Make yo next ya bes!!

Check this out:

Game ova everything, man tha way I gotta go. To even think

I might slow down, it's impossible. So think about it. How you gon

stop a ninja that is unstoppable?

Rest in peace K-G. Love you bruh...

-Jabba

From The Beat: An even better question is how are you gonna make a man open his eyes to the reality that he is stopped, even while he proclaims that he's unstoppable? As much as your "big bruh" taught you, it didn't prevent him from paying the biggest price of all. What price will you have to pay before you see that the course you've chosen (and that he schooled you in) is a dead end, sometimes literally?

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

I think my parents will say I'm uncontrollable because all the worse things that I done to make them look bad. I did not mean to, but my head was somewhere else. I ended up doing stupid shhh making me and my fam look bad.

But it's '09, so I have to step my shhh up. I'm going to a grouper. I'm gonna do my six months. That nothing. I can thug that out, if female don't got nothing to say, 'cause me, I'm quick to bust a female with all this anger in me. So don't mess with me.

I'm gone

-Dri

From The Beat: Why would you "thug out" your time instead of making the most out of it, trying to change up what you do by learning all you can? As for going off on the first female that pushes your buttons, isn't that just another example of "doing stupid shhh" that only hurts you and your family? If your head was "somewhere else," it's time to put it back where it belongs, for your own good.

It's Just Gorgeous

The irony of it all
I love with irony
I seek integrity
I speak with modesty
Very receptive honesty
Living with a head start
A purpose profound,
Art in essence
With persistence
Time is ticking
Learn your lessons!

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: This is very poetic, Rhonda, and it contains real gems. We'd love to read a piece of prose (not poetry) that describes and explains what those lessons that "receptive honesty" and "persistence" are that you have learned.

Hard Not To Love Me

Hey Beat, it's ya lady, Lil' Ladie T. So, if my friends and family were willing to tell me honestly exactly what they think of me, I think they would say my weakness is love. I'm always looking for someone to love me. And money.

My strengths are my love for everyone. They would say I'm sweet and sensitive, but still hard and evil. But everyone still loves me though. It's hard not to!

-Lil' Ladie T

From The Beat: We'd like to read a full page of you explaining what it means (to you) to be both "sweet and sensitive" and "hard and evil." Maybe two pages!

Think Twice

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Who's up Beat?

Here I am, stuck I this box for another night! I am sooo sick and tired of this! It's like the days are going so fast, which is a good thing but it's a bad thing as well, because I'm missing out n so many things on the outs!

I spent my birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years! More and more holidays are coming up, and it seems like I'm never gonna get out!

Five months, almost six, I've been in here, and it feels like I've been here like a month or two! Time flies so fast! I still remember when I first got here, my first tears, my first court day, my first letter/phone call, my first everything! In here, I've gotten the time to think to myself, think of al my mistakes and think of al my "firsts." It's amazing how many "firsts" I've done at such a young age! Many of them being not appropriate, but fun to do!

In here, I got to do a few good "firsts" as well, like my first book I read and my first full page letter I've wrote at my own, my own thinkin'. Not as a requirement for school or somethin'...

Well, hopefully I'll be up outta here very, very soon. I've been here to long, and I feel like I've changed enough to live I the free world! Ready to get through all the obstacles life has for me!

-Yung Chuy, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's very clear to us, Yung Chuy, that you are, indeed, doing your own thinking. That is so important for your life and your future. We can understand why it hurts to have experienced these "firsts" while a prisoner in a box, but some people never experience the thrill of thinking for themselves, and so they are never really free, even if they are not in a box. Maybe some of those "firsts" were things adults would find "not appropriate," but youth is a time to experiment, even with things "not appropriate" as long as you don't let them consume you, as long as they become, like all experience, a guide to who you want to be and who you don't want to be. You will continue to use your mind and think for yourself. You've got a future ahead of you!

I'm Not A Bad Person

If my family or friends were to tell me how they think of me, I would because I can see if my friends are real with me. I'm not a person to do bad stuff. Only bad people do that. So if my friends are bad, then I think I wouldn't want to hang out with them.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Again, we need to know a lot more than what you've written here, and that's because you've divided your time among three different topics. Please choose just one topic, and write a lot more about it.

Hollerin' That Shhh

What's really good wit' The Beat? This the kid, Yung Von, claimin' that you know what. But I'm 'bouta holla at y'all about this street shhh. Most of y'all ninjas hollerin' 'bout how y'all doin' shhh, but really ain't doin' nothin' but yappin' gums, ain't throwin' ones, and hollerin' 'bout how they got guns.

But check this out: you can lie to a ninja, but can't lie to yo'self. Ninjas know what's really real. Ninjas probably shootin', but ain't shootin' to kill. An' when ninjas be behind these walls, they wanna yap when these walls an' windows closed, but when they open, it's a different thing. But like I said, ninjas know what is really is gone.

-Yung Von

From The Beat: Stop worrying about what the next man is doing and put your focus where it might do you some good. If you're one of those people who shoots to kill, then your neighbor fronting about what he does is the least of your worries. You've got much bigger issues to deal with, and they all start with you. Is this the life you want, that of a slave, a prisoner? If not, it's time you put your brain in gear and looked inside instead of out. The path you were on led you to lock up. If you don't want to be led there again, you need to walk a different path. Simple as that!

Torn Between Going And Staying

What's up with The Beat? It's finally '09. Man, guess what! They sending your girl to Colorado 'til 2010-2011. That shhh got me mad right now, but it's good feel me.

Right now, I'm torn. I ain't even going to lie. I want to go for the better so I can change, but then another part of me is like, "Forget that! I'm not going nowhere! The only place I'm goin' is home," even though I know it's not good.

But feel me, I'm still thinking. That's why I say I'm torn, feel me. But I might go, feel me, and if I don't like how the shhh going, I'ma be back on the first flight back to Cali, "Cause I'm goin' goin' back to back to Cali." Ha ha, naw.

But they can't take a ninja out the ghetto; they can't take the ghetto out of me 'cause I'm a G.

-Queen Bri

From The Beat: We think what your torn about is whether to think like a little girl (the one that wants to run; the one that declares, "I'm not going nowhere!") or like a responsible young woman who knows that sometimes you have to make hard choices to make it easier in the future. Your attitude will determine what you find in Colorado. If you expect to find "shhh," then that's what you'll find. But if you approach it as a new experience — exposure to new people, new ideas, new ways of thinking and doing — then that's what you'll find. Whether ghetto or not, as we grow and mature, we all become much more than what we were as children. (Sorry about the song you put down. Even if you've been singing "Put It On Me," it's not original with you, so we won't publish it.)

Easy To Get Guns

Why a lot of people getting shot today?
'Cause guns is easy to get now...
All you need is around four-hundred-dollars
And you get power to take someone' life
That easy, huh?
An' if you got guns
You going to ask yourself
Why have it but don't use it?

-Muha

From The Beat: If the only way you can think to use a gun is against another person, then never pick one up. If you use it the way you suggest, two lives and two families will be destroyed.

Can't Stay Out Of Jail

What's up Beat? This ya boy Lil' Bra. One thing I've always wanted to do is stay out of jail. I just got out and a week later I'm back In.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: We wish you would put more effort into your writing. If you only managed to stay out a week, then it's time to examine why. If not, you can count on spending even more time wishing you were out... Next time, give us more than three lazy sentences!

I'm Not Running

Hey Beat, it's ya lady, Lil' Ladie T. Man, I only been in this thang for 21 days and it feel like forever, but I supposedly only got 10 more days in here, so hopefully we'll see! But chea, I'm gone tell y'all what's been goin' on wit' me since I don't know what else ta say...

Sooo, they sending me to a grouper, hopefully only for six months. Then we gone work on emancipating me! Yay me! But yeah, I'ma stay because I had a dream that I broke my leg tryna run, so that basically told my ass to stay put. So that's what I'ma do. So wish me love! Me loves

-Lil' Ladie T

From The Beat: Hallelujah for dreams!

Thoughts Of A Young Goon

Thoughts going in these young goons heads —money, weed, sex and murder. But some of these clowns that call they self goons listen to too much music, yamsayin?

But me and mine was raised like this before we even started listenin' to Plies and Lil' Wayne... Its coo' to listen to it, but don't use that as the reason why you murk a ninja. You want to pop pills and listen to Plies or Husalah, all I'm sayin' is why you ninjas gotta be on pills and listenin' to that murder music? Just remember it's them pills and not really you.

-Lil' Goo

From The Beat: So, what is in your head, Lil' Goo? And how will what is in your head help or hurt you, assuming you would rather be free than kept in a box and told what to do?

Bad Influence

I had been a bad influence on my sister and my friend. I put pressure on them to get their asses up, so we can go rob somebody so I can get some money. So we handled that and got caught up. Now I wish that I neva did that shhh.

My sis left 'cause she did not do nothing. Her dumb ass just ran with us, but she home now. I hope she doing ok. I miss her and my nephew. But this boy we came in with, he still in here thuggin' it out just like me. Got my head to the sky. I ain't neva lie, ya dig.

-Dri

From The Beat: Do you wish you never "did that" because it landed you here or because it was the wrong thing to do? The answer to that question is the best predictor of whether you'll be able to stay out of places like this or not.

My Life At The Ranch

The Ranch, it's a shhh hole. To me, it's phony... same thing over and over. It feel like my life going in circles. The staff is shady up here. You gotta walk a straight line, you got to take showers with people, go to the bathroom by people, clean up, get a phone call every once a week, see your family once a week. I didn't know my life was go' end up like this. Why me? Why, God?

I'm up here chillin' with my homies, but it's kind of smooth in some ways. Free the Ranch thugs.

-Yung J. Newt

From The Beat: The truth of the matter is that you have to free yourself — not from this place, but from your thinking that leads to this place, or worse. We're interested in the answer to your questions — "Why me? Why, God?" Your life has not "ended up" at all; this is just a stop along the way. So, if you feel like you're going in circles, take some time to think about your questions, and see if your answers help to put your feet on a new path that leads away from here and towards something else.

Four Topics In One

Um, I was a bad influences on my little brother when I started drinking and smoking cigs in front of him, because he started following my steps.

I think everyone's life is in the same value simple as that.

Um, I don't know what people think of me so I don't know what they say.

One Thing I've always wanted to do is get a scholarship to college to play football but I messed that all up.

-Kyle

From The Beat: We want you to write about JUST ONE topic, Kyle because when you write on more than one, you really can't say very much. Since we won't print one or two-sentence pieces, we put all of your writing together in one. Next time, please choose just one topic and write a lot more about it. Thanks.

Bad Influences

Most people who come into YGC have a friend they look up to and listen to. Some come in here because of their actions with that one person. You may want to impress or gain respect by committing crimes. The person who you look up to may tell you to ride with him and go to rob a store or steal a car. And you will probably do that because of your pride.

I've been in YGC for seven months. That's over half a year, but it doesn't feel that long. When you're in here, time goes on. Life isn't going to wait up for you. And it's all because I was blind to the truth.

I'm in here because I listened to the person I looked up to. I committed a violent crime because I was scared of losing a friend. Every time I got into trouble I was with this person. I'm not a bad person, I just made a bad decision. Everyone makes bad decisions. That's what makes us humans.

I didn't want to do what I did. I feel bad about it and the person. I see now that my actions waved out to hurt more people than I knew. I may sound soft, but I don't care, because I know in my heart that I don't want to live like this. I want to stay true to myself. If I hadn't gotten locked up, I would have never found that out about myself. So getting locked up was the best thing that happened to me. But it's just the beginning.

-C-Rider, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is one of the most intelligent pieces of writing we've come across in a long time! You don't sound soft at all because it takes great courage to look deeply into yourself, and then to share what you find — even those things you're not proud of. Yes, this is just the beginning of a new life for you, a life where you are in control of your own destiny; a life where you have nothing to prove to others, and everything to prove to yourself. We are very honored to be able to print something so good, so deep and so hopeful in The Beat. Thank you!

The Only Way Out Is The Grouper

Man, I hate havin' to go to group homes. This stuff weak. I don't understand why they send us to group homes, because they don't believe the people we stay with — our family. I believe that's messed up because what happens if our family is able to take care of us, then what? Well, guess what? We still go to group homes and guess what happens if you try to fight the case? Then you stay in juvenile 'til you finally give up and go along with it.

Shhh, I've been in for about three months, tryin' to get released to the fam, but guess what? I guess the only way out is the group home.

-Leave

From The Beat: Well, sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and do what they want you to do, even if you don't agree with it, so that you can get through it all t the other side and rejoin your family. The only real answer, of course, is to stop doing the stuff that gives others power over your life.

Topics Taken Altogether

My cousin is a bad influence because he tried things that I would not do, like weed and cigarettes.

About the popos shooting the boy because the popo did not know if he had weapons.

My brother, all he told me to think before I do. He told me when I get in trouble, he will kick my butt.

The one thing I wanted Is to travel with my uncle when I get my diploma.

-Steuert

From The Beat: Please write about only one topic. We don't print one or two-sentence pieces, so we put all four of your writings together into one so that we could print it. Next time, just one topic please, so you can write a lot more about it.

Rambo Rob

I am Rambo Rob and The Beat Within got a whole bunch of suckas in it. They suckas in here talk about what they been through, and they ain't been through shhh. This time ain't shhh in here. They crybaby ass can't do the time, don't do the crime. If you didn't know what you did was that bad, shouldn't did somthin' you knew more about.

Also, for the ones who be lying in this Beat Within is some shady ninjas. How you lie about shhh you did for some phony-ass juvenile newspaper? And why lie because you ain't got the guts to do it yourself.

These females in The Beat that cry about they boyfriends and so-called ex-husbands which ain't shhh but a fabricated thing on a holy ritual. So what? You young. Move on with your worthless lies. More than 80 percent is fat. 10 percent ain't really even had a male lover in yo' life, so shut the hell up.

And for the real ninjas in The Beat speakin' that real shhh, do what you do, but the idiots don't snitch on yaselfs. And for me Rambo Da Animal, why I'm on y'all sissy-ass crackers so hard, 'cause y'all didn't realize to put a real ninja in The Beat when you see one. So I'm outta here.

-Rambo Da Animal

From The Beat: *My, my, my... How wonderful it must be for you to be the only REAL ninja here, and to be better than everyone else in these pages. We can understand your frustration, being so much smarter than everyone else, but still having to answer to strangers with power over your life — the power YOU gave them — telling you when to get up and go to bed, when and what to eat, when to keep quiet and when to speak. Seems to us that you're wearing the same used drawers that every other boy here wears... But then, what do we know?*

Wasting Life

Right now I'm wastin' part time of my life. I regret it. Being in here makes me mad, 'cause during rec, I watch people on national TV playing football, and that's my dream. But me, I always act a fool on the outs.

But, yeah, I'm getting sent to the group home and hoping to complete it for my dream. All right, then, Beat! Out!

-Tommy Gunn

From The Beat: *When your wish to play football is more important to you than acting the fool, that's when you'll stop acting the fool! We hope you do, because we would much rather see you playing football on national TV than see you locked behind four walls!*

I'm Still Here

What's good with this beef shhh? I mean, Beat shhh? I'm still here, ya dig? They tryin' to run a ninja out, but I won't budge. I'ma scrape this 'til the wheels fall off, no lie. I'm jus' trying to maintain on this Ranch. They tryin' to give a ninja time fo' anything, so I'm goin' get this pleasure package, ease my mind an' do the responsible thang.

I jus' did a perfect program 'til this week. They pullin' a ninja' cards, but I ain't showin' my hand jus' yet. They gone get it sooner or later, 'cause I done been through worse than this. They mus' don't know how the Young Dunny operate. They want me to run an' mess up my future or somethin', but I'ma get it, regardless.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: *Good for you for not messing up in here. But if they're counting on you to mess up your own future, how are you going to frustrate their plans? When you say "they don't know how the Young Dunny operate," we worry that you think you can find your dreams by doing the same kinds of things that led you here. We hope we're wrong, because experience tells us that doing what you've done before only leads to the same consequences you've experienced before. Do you have something new in mind?*

Nine Months To Think About It

My girl six months pregnant, and I'ma be in juvy for eight-nine months. I ain't going to see her give birth. Sometimes I think back, why I did all the stuff I did? Was it worth it? I know I got nine months to think about it. Hope I get out early.

-Free Me

From The Beat: *You mean you're locked up while your girl is about to give birth, and you're still wondering if it was worth doing what led you here? Why do you need nine months to think about it? (By the way, we won't print one or two-sentence pieces, so next time choose just one topic, not three, to write a whole lot more about.)*

Locked Since Thanksgiving

This ya boy, Baby James. I hopped up in this place a lil' after Thanksgiving. I'ma rub in y'all faces and say it was poppin' on Thanksgiving, but too bad y'all couldn't have enjoyed it, 'cause y'all was locked up. But now I'm up in this G-thang with y'all, so I ain't mad.

-Baby James

From The Beat: *Why would you want to rub your freedom in the fact of other who were locked up? How would you feel if those who were free on Christmas and New Years laughed at you for being locked up for those holidays?*

Come Ride With Me

Young savage, big dawg status. Rob 'cause I ain't never had shhh. Now that I got this, it get hectic everywhere I go.

We out here, We out here. You now where I be wildin' out, ridin' 'round with the heat. Young thug baby, come ride with a gangsta.

-Man Man

From The Beat: *We took out all your references to others as not appropriate. You say you're out there wildin' out, but maybe you haven't opened your eyes yet. When you do, you'll see that you're in here dreaming about wildin' out. Sounds like you're planning on putting yourself in a box with boys for long periods of time. Or, are we missing something?*

Skip's Broadcast: One Thing I Always Wanted To Do

One thing I wanted to do was skydive. I know it seem kinda daring, but I think of it as I'm on top the world, ya feel me. It's like I'm lookin' down on the world, ya dig. Kinda like I'm bein' In a higher power position... plus I feel like I can fly.

-Skip Too Fly

From The Beat: *Even though we can't imagine jumping out of an airplane, we can understand what you mean. Former President George H.W. Bush (the first) celebrated his 80th birthday with a skydive. It wasn't his first, though. That occurred way back in 1944 during WWII when he was shot down over the Pacific island of Chi Chi Jima.*

I Miss Ma Dawgs

What's poppin' with The Beat? Man, y'all know that this ya man, C-B. I'm still at this Ranch, missin' my thugs on the block and my ninjas that's down for life. I really need to get back, 'cause ninjas talking crazy, and I'm not feelin' that, ya heard me? I love all my ninjas. I would die for my 'hood.

-Cb

From The Beat: *What good are you to your 'hood by dying for it? Isn't it more important to live for your 'hood, for your family, and for yourself? You will be back where you want to be, for sure, but then the choices you make will determine what happens after that. That's where the rubber meets the road, because that's where your own choices make the difference between personal freedom and the system's slavery*

Bad Influence To My Lil' Bro

What's good Beat this Young Uso Kefi. I think that I'm a bad influence to my little brother and sister by coming here. What I mean by that is by me coming in here might make my little ones think that it's okay to come here when it's not.

That's why when I get out I'm going to change and start going to school I want to be a good role-model if that how you spell it. To my brother and sisters until next time.

-Young Uso Kefi

From The Beat: We're glad that you want to be a positive role model to your brother and sister. Have you talked to them about it - the life you don't want them to live? It's great that you can use your care and devotion for their well-being as motivation for yourself. We wish you good luck!

Human Being I Am

Today I had one of those profound experiences that results in a conversation with ones self, where a question is asked and the answer is so obvious. That just the fact that it was unknown before that moment in time, makes the fiber of what I hold to be real and true begin to unravel.

When that happened, I began to piece by piece see where I went wrong with this new vision and my newfound knowledge. I can put back together what fell apart more securely and with more confidence that the next time someone asks me to change the channel the result won't be the same.

-Geko

From The Beat: Wow, this is a deep piece, Geko. What does it mean to you? What was it that made you sit and ponder your being for so long?

I Know I Am A Bad Influence

Warm greeting to all locked down. This is Chuko once again. I am going to touch on this topic "Bad Influences".

When I got out from James Boys Ranch in Morgan Hill, I told myself that I was going to do good on the outs. I lied to myself because when I got out, I went back to my varrio and to my old associates and I convinced them to join me in a couple of events and we got locked up because of me.

-Chuko

From The Beat: It sounds like you had the right idea at first, but following through with it was hard. Next time, before you get out, set up a concrete plan so it's harder to go back to your old ways. Stay out of trouble so you don't land yourself and your friends back in the halls.

Guadalajara, Jalisco

Well on tonight's topic of one thing I always wanted to do is go to Guadalajara, Jalisco. I want to go over there just to kick it for a bit and see how it is over there.

My family is from there and I heard it's real nice over there. I think it would be sick over there, 'cause I can just go and not trip off the gang task force jamming me up like crazy!

I'll go over there sometime in my lifetime (hopefully). Anyways I'm pretty much out of things to say and I gots to let my mind rest. I'm gone.

-Pancho

From The Beat: That sounds like a really nice idea. Not only would you be connecting with your family, but you would be avoiding trouble, and it would be good to get a break from the things that have gotten you in trouble in the past. Make it happen. Maybe you'll find the love of your life there. Who knows!

Memories

I think of memories of a lost past
As my thoughts clash,
go head and mix the
Weed with the Henney and pull out a tall
Glass for those who's want to pass away,
We living in these tragic days
what takes place out on the streets
that can put you
Forever behind a cage
it's like life's a big maze,
with a lot of trap doors
Life's a fine hell which makes it hard to score,
it's like odds and evens
Sometimes the game could be deceiving
Believing it's good to be a heathen
Surrounded by Demons, it just the
Life I chose,
I'm looking to save my soul
But it's like God can't hear me,
I think the devil trying to stir me,
to tell the truth homie
I think the devil starting to fear me,
I'm a loose cannon like the
Devil on the streets I'll be the last
Man standing.

-G

From The Beat: This is a very insightful piece. You touch on some interesting things, like the complexity of life, and it sounds like you've begun to reflect on how you can avoid those "trap doors." Keep trying to save your soul, you're making a good start with your self-reflection. It starts with words, then follow through with action!

My Plans

Well, when I grow up I want to move back to New York with my grandma after high school to go to school, to be a cosmetologist, and own my own salon and make my own money and help my grandma not have to depend on no one but myself.

So that's what I want in the future.

-Alicia

From The Beat: You've laid out some really great goals, what will you do to make sure that they happen? Before you take the big leap and fly across the country you have to lay out your plans so that you aren't stranded when you do take that big step forward. We know that you can do it, Alicia, and we wish you the best!

Becoming Responsible

One thing I've always wanted to do is set a good example for my younger family members because they all look up to me. A lot of my younger cousins stay out of state or in different cities and whenever they call for me, I'm always either getting into trouble or being locked up and so far I haven't been able to set this example.

So, when I get out this time, I need to put my own foot down and take responsibility in becoming a man because you have to have things and goals in life to survive. So far, I haven't taken responsibility in my actions that get me where I'm at in the first place.

So when I get out im going to try and fulfill my main goal and set a good example for all my younger family members...

-Manuel

From The Beat: Family is a great inspiration to do better in your life. We can feel your determination in this letter and we hope that everything works out for you. All you have to do is really want to do better in your life and work hard. It's easy to say what you want, but it's much more harder to take the initiative and start going in that direction. Be the example they need for a better guidance.

One Thing I've Always Wanted To Do Is...

I always went to play football since I was a little kid. Football is still my sport. I play street football and we always get into a fight. It be like racial thing I think 'cause it will be the Samoans vs. whoever. Most of the time, we play by ourselves 'cause no one wants to play. Since I'm getting older, things starting to change for me. Times up so until next time.

-Young Uso Kefi

From The Beat: It's always good to have a hobby that you enjoy, but maybe not so good if it causes fights. When you get out, keep playing, but try to stay out of those fights. Remember a game is about playing, winning and losing. Tell us more about how things are changing in your life.

The Value of Life

Well, I don't really care about nobody else's life 'cause they don't mean anything to me 'cause they're not my familia or homies from my varrio, but like I said I don't care about nobody else. Well, I leave you with this and I'm gone.

-Kollmer

From The Beat: Do you care about your family? If so, is this the way to show it? Stop being so selfish! Open the door and let some good vibes come into your life.

One Thing I've Always Wanted To Do.

I always wanted to fly and be a superhero 'cause they have all the fame, the girls and the money. Damn, I wish I had hella girls and money and god damn, a whole lot more.

- Kollmer

From The Beat: What about being a superhero to save lives?

Look at Me

A few months ago my mom's boyfriend was talking to me about school. He said if I didn't go to school I wouldn't get a job and I would be a failure and I won't succeed in life without an education.

He also told me I was going to end up in the hall because the way I was going always skipping school, getting in trouble, not paying attention to what is going on in my life. He told me to change and I did the opposite and kept on getting in trouble and not going to school.

Look at me, now I'm locked up.

-Matthew

From The Beat: We know that sometimes we rebel against the "authority" figures in our life, even when they mean well. Do you think that you'll take your mother's boyfriend's advice once you get out? What's the plan?

I'm Out Of Here

Well, what's up wit it Beat? This be Armando coming from this unit, just chillin' and waiting for my released date 2-3-09. I got 2 weeks left and I'm out, and 12 days later I'm going to be 17.

Well I think I'm ready to stop coming back. I'm tired of coming in and out. I need to stay out and take care of my son.

Well, I can't wait 'till I go back to my city, Newark. I miss being there.

-Armando

From The Beat: It sounds like you're pretty motivated to not come back. You have a lot of good reasons to stay out - taking care of your son, and returning back to your city. What are you going to do to ensure that you won't come back?

Losing My Head

It seems everyday I'm closer to losing my head
And if the day that it will stop will be the day that I am dead

I'm a log slick like smoke
Never will choke, wana be like me take a note
Don't be provoking mess with me ye broken
Can ya hear my voice 'cause it sound like I'm mothafreaking jokes

I'm an animal psycho like the Hannibal
My life is unplanable brain is un-scan-able
Survivor like a cannibal
I hear that I'm incredible
With everyone's attention like I'm speaking from a pedestal
Giving out a speech here to teach like my homeboy preach
Stay clean with the bleach stain fresh with "Febreeze"
Flowing with an ease and I leave my fans pleased
So welcome to a world of real mother fucking G's
Every single day I wake up and stay working on my music

-Yaya

From The Beat: Take less about what people think about you, and more about what you think about yourself. Use your time locked up to reflect on how you can plan your life, because this is the time to plan a successful release plan.

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

I would want my friends and family to tell me all my faults and strengths and how I am because I always wanted to know how people see me from their perspective. Not like I would ever change or anything, just to please their wants, but just to know what people think.

I think people would say I'm a good person and that I'm a funny guy, but then again, that's just what I think. I'm pretty sure there's at least a couple people that don't got anything nice to say about how I am.

-Dave

From The Beat: We can understand why you wouldn't change because someone told you they didn't like the things you do, you are your own person and no one can change that. However, when your actions lead you behind bars then don't you think that a change should be made, Dave?

Young Minded

I never thought people could go stupid and dumb, jumping up and down like it to be fun.
You're a hardcore gangster with a thizz face?
What the heck? To me you're a disgrace.
It's ok if people want to hear Mac Dre,
but ghost riding, going dumb, is getting hella gay,
so listen everybody to what I got to say.
I don't go stupid doo-doo-dumb.
I keep it gangster listen to the rhymes of this song.
No Jordans on my feet homie, I sport Cortez,
and we ain't shaking dreads 'cause we sport bald heads,
I might pop a pill, but I ain't going dumb.
What's up with that face
like you just tasted mace,
I keep it gangster in my town ya' I do it all day.

-Chino

From The Beat: You have skills as a writer, but if you aren't staying away from drugs, and the g life what are you doing to avoid that behavior that seems to come with the usage of drugs? On the other hands, it seems to us that you are using The Beat Within to show off or to represent. We don't do that. For this time, we will let slide. For the next one you have to show us something different that can help you and others. Step up to the plate and teach!

See Lots And Lots Of Girls

What happening Beat? This your boy Shady Mackin'. I'm in here doing a lil' bid on 5 months. But yeah, let me hop on the topic. One thing I've always wanted to do is travel.

I want to go to like Thialand, Brazil Puerto Rico or something where there's hella girls. Ya feel me I'm just trying to get out, stack bread and cut. Trying to do me, on this grown man hype.

-Shady Mackin

From The Beat: Well, it's good that you're interested in traveling, but maybe focus less on the women of other countries, and more on the culture, things you can learn.

I Miss Mi Familia

Well, today I'm going to write about mi familia. I hella miss my family a lot, I wonder when I'm going to be able to be with them. It hurts me because I'm missin' out on all the special things in their lives.

I really miss my sisters, I can't wait to see them and do all the things we used to do together. I want all mi familia to know that I love them and miss them so much; we will be together again some day soon!

I'm out to all doing a lot of time stay up and don't let no one put you down! Keep your head held high, much love. Stay up.

-Huera

From The Beat: It hurts to be away from your family, Huera, but you'll be seeing them soon enough. What will you do, once you get out, to be sure that you stay out of juvie and instead stay with your family?

Bad Influence

Check this out I'm a bad influence on my lil' ninjas because they see me as a head general because I be selling d and they see me getting fast money, so that's what they want to do. But now that I look at it, I would love to guide them in the right way because look where I'm at, but that it from me Beat yo' boy.

-Young Nasty

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that they've look up to you while you did things you're not proud of, but you can use the influence you have on them to guide them in the right direction, which you seem to understand. You're in a place where you can tell them why they shouldn't do what you've been doing, and you can use them as motivation to stop doing the things that landed you in the hall.

Others Say I Am A Bad Influence

What's up, Beat? This is the homie Lil' Casper just kicking back in the max unit. Well, today's topic is "Bad Influence". Everybody tells me that I'm a bad influence because they said that I'm always hanging out with the wrong people and that I'm always getting into trouble, getting locked up and all those things.

But I think that I'm not a bad influence because I just do what I do. I don't make nobody do nothing that they don't wanna do. They do it because they wanna do it, just like I did, nobody forced me into the gang life. I made the choice and I don't blame nobody because everyone makes their own choices.

I think I made some good choices even though I know they're wrong, but I can't turn back. Hopefully, I get sent to The Ranch without the strike that they wanna give me. Well, this is all for now, this vato is out.

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: You're right, Casper, we all make our own decisions. However, our friends do influence us at moments. Has anyone ever influenced you into doing something you initially thought was wrong? If so, did you do it? And if so, why did you do it knowing it was wrong?

One Thing I Always Wanted

One thing I always wanted to do is go to Hawaii; still 'til this day I want to go, I promised I'd go.

So that's the thing I've always wanted to do and still am.

-Miranda

From The Beat: Hawaii is a beautiful place to go but how would you achieve this goal, Miranda?

Hmph....

I hate when people cry about what they DID do. It irritates me especially when they say too much about something and lie about it too, and after, they start tryin' to flip the script so a playa could feel bad for him. But that shhh ain't gon' work, so just keep cryin' on paper. You look stupid.

-Dave

From the Beat: When your peers open up and tell their stories, they are showing The Beat readers something that they would normally not let anyone see. They are pouring out their pain and frustration and their hurt and anger onto these pages, their only source of venting. Why should they be the stupid ones for letting out their emotions instead of bottling it up? There's nothing wrong with it. You should try as well. Stop hating!

My Life

Once when I was just into my teens, I've seen a lot of violence. I was raised by gang bangers and surrounded by them.

I had a friend. One day my sis gave me a cigarette and I gave it to my friend. I said, "Try it," and he did. The next four days this kid was messing with him. My sis told me, "Tell him fight his own battle."

I told him, "Forget it! Just box 'em." We never got caught. After that he started to bang. A few months later he bounced. I never got to tell him stop everything I taught him.

But damn, look at me. I ain't no gangbanger but... Now I'm a good influence and ready towards my new future.

-Moe Joe

From The Beat: It sounds like you carry around some guilt for influencing your friend the way you did. But you can erase that guilt by using your influence now to make yourself better, and to help others to make themselves better. What is the new future you imagine for yourself?

Influenced To Bang

Today's topic is bad influences... I got influenced to bang. I remember I was with my cousin hanging out, doing bad stuff, posting up in the hood looking for trouble, getting gee-rides, looking for haynas.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Why do you think you were so easily influenced to bang? When you get out what is going to change? Or are you ready to walk down a new path?

Nobody's Fault But Mine

There was the first time I got locked up and my mom was devastated. I got home and she told me it was her fault and I told her no, it's just me that I'm messing up.

That's one brutally honest appraisal. I would never want to experience that ever again.

-Dave

From The Beat: It hurts when our parents blame themselves for our mistakes. They feel like it's their fault, like they were bad parents when in reality they are good parents and we just messed up. Why do you think you mess up so badly that you end up in the hall? Do you think that you'll turn your life around or will you keep going in the same direction? Good luck with the group home. Don't run!

For One Mistake

For one mistake, I lost touch with reality
 For one mistake, I lost the free world
 For one mistake, I lost my girl
 For one mistake, I lost years of my life
 For one mistake, there's so much pain and tears in my life
 But there's one thing I know that this solid young man will never break because of one mistake.

-Rascal

From the Beat: This is great, Rascal, we'd love to hear more from you!

NYC Baby

One thing I've always wanted to do is party in NYC. I like the way it looks out there. I wanna go party with all the movie stars and the music people, that would be hella tight. I'd probably go with my fam bam and my best friend, that would be super duper fun. I want to go when I'm like 18 years old 'cause that's when my mama won't trip (LOL).

Well that's it for now about me and New York bye.

-Fame

From The Beat: That sounds like fun, Fame! What can you do now so that you can make this dream a reality in the future? Successfully complete probation!

Influenced My Friend

I remember this one time I influenced my friend to play with fire in front of his house during his little cousin's birthday. When we lit the pile of leaves on fire the cops seen the smoke so they stopped us and told his parents that we were playing with fire in front of his family. I felt so embarrassed but anyways I felt so bad about telling him to play with fire, that's one bad influence.

Well, when I was done hanging with him I felt so bad I would never, ever want to do that again. If I had to go back in time I would want to be the one to get caught playing with fire.

-Segouia

From The Beat: Sometimes we'll tell our friends to do something that we know is wrong, it happens. Did you ever apologize to your friend? We can see that you feel remorseful but feeling badly won't make things right. Remember that we all make mistakes; it's whether or not we learn from them that matters.

Kicking Back

Well yeah, getting locked up ain't anything to me anymore, I just kick back with my roommate in the cell. I just get up early in the morning brush my teeth, eat my breakfast tray, go back to sleep, wake up and go to school.

Damn, school is my favorite part of the day now, it makes the day go by faster. I use to hate going to school, I would never wake up but now it's like damn school, well then let's go. Being in school I just do my work, the teacher plays music for us, and then I just draw and kick back with the homies.

After school ends I just go to my cell and kick back with my roommate playing cards games like Uno then at the end of my day I go to sleep after saying what's cracking to the night staff.

-Guerro

From The Beat: What an insightful look into your day. Why do you think you like school now that you're in juvie instead of when you were on the outs? Is it because you have to go when you're locked up in the hall? When you get out do you think you'll stay in school or will you resort back to your old ways?

One Day

My momma put me out as a young teen
 So I started selling crack cocaine and codeine.
 Time to stack some paper, I got to do it, quick thinking.
 I'm a juvenile but they don't know who they messing with.

Yeah, my momma youngest son
 And I live everyday like it's my last.
 Everybody and they momma asking why, but I'm in the game,

I live by the game and die by the game.
 If I die or should I say if I go,
 Bury me next to harms way, next to the come and go
 'Cause tomorrow ain't promised to me
 The only thing promised to a thug is the penitentiary.
 So I'm going to take care of my business on the smooth tip,
 Watch my back selling crack and pack these clips.
 And when you think about that you say it's a trip
 One day you're here and the next day you're gone....

-Lil' Flaco

From The Beat: Is this flow inspired by your real life or were you inspired by a friend or peer? What is your plan to improving your life?

I've Always Wanted to....

One thing I've always wanted to do is slap the living shhh out of George W. Bush while smoking a Cuban cigar.

When I get out, I'm going to go to the Playboy Mansion 'cause Hefner has been writing me telling me he got a bunch a females waiting for me, and when I get out I'm going to get picked up in a stretch Hummer with strippers and we gonna pop bottles and just party in the limo 'ill I get to the mansion and take one of the girls to a room and spend the rest of the night with her. Wake up the next morning with breakfast in bed and do it all over again.

-The One and Only

From The Beat: GWB's popularity was at an all-time low, one of the worse presidents, and knowing what you want to do is a dream, and what a vivid dream you had. The one and Only! We can all enjoy a perfect and fun time as long as it doesn't affect our lives in any way. So be aware of it. You don't want to come back here to spend months or years over ONE night of pleasure. Do you?

Change On Me

When we met, it all happened so fast.
 You said you loved me and that it would last
 But now it seems that it was all a lie,
 It seems like my love for you was to pass you by.
 My love for you will never be the same
 My heart still aches from the sorrow and the pain,
 Time has come for me to say goodbye
 Although the precious times will never leave my mind.
 Why did you have to change on me?
 Your love was so easy to see,
 I gave you all my time but why couldn't I make you mine?
 Changing your love was the best thing to do
 My love was strong for just me and you.
 You went your way, baby, I went mine
 Searching for a love with a hope to find.
 If you decide to come back to me
 I'll be waiting so desperately,
 Until then I hope to find
 Someone to love me all of the time.

-Isabella

From The Beat: Love is such a beautiful and wondrous emotion but you're still young, you shouldn't worry so much! Live your life, finish school, and be who you want to be! We hope to hear more of your beautiful poetry.

I Like Being A Bad Influence

I am a bad influence because I have been in and out of jail and every time my homeboys don't wanna break the law, I always convinced them to be a lowlife with me and what makes me an even worse bad influence is that none of this bothers me.

Because I am a clepto and I love what I have became in life.

-Moose

From The Beat: Why do you influence your friends to break the law? Just because you are a clepto doesn't mean that you have to suck your friends into your issue. Your friends trust you and you break their trust every time you influence them to do things that they would normally not do. Where do you think your life is going when you walk down this path?

Hawaii

Hey Beat, well, this Malae again. Well, usually I ain't really feelin' the topic but let me tell you, today I had a bad day. So let me get back to the topic.

One thing I've always wanted to do is go to Hawaii for vacation and to visit hella my Samoan fam bam. And I'm wishing to get married on the beach with the right man that will love me and always be there for me when I'm down and need help.

-Malae

From The Beat: We're sorry that you are having a bad day, and we want to thank you for writing for us even though you weren't having a great day. How do you feel about having your family so far away in Hawaii? Have you ever thought of going out there to live with them?

Bad Influence

Wha's up Beat? Well, first I want to say wha's up and give love and respect to the homeboys. This the homeboy G up in the max unit.

Well, do I think that I have a bad influence on anyone? I somewhat do. I think right now I am a bad influence on my family, like my little brothers and sisters. I'm locked up facing life leaving my younger bro's and sis's out there alone. I'm doing things that they might think it's okay because they seen me do it. But it's not.

But I don't think that it is good to influence someone in a bad way. If you're going to influence someone, you should tell them the consequence to what there getting into. Then the choice is on them. But I just pray my family and homeboys don't follow my foot steps, or don't get caught up doing what they do.

Well alright then Beat.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: The problem with "telling" instead of "showing" is that children learn by following what they see, not by what they are told is right or wrong. In other words, the only way to influence your younger siblings to act the way you want them to act is for you to set the example through your own actions. Praying that they don't follow your footsteps won't do it, so you might want to think about changing your foot steps...

Am I A Bad Influence?

Well, one time I can remember being a bad influence was when my friend barely came from Arizona. He wasn't involved in gangs, but he started hanging around with my 'hood and he got involved and now he started to get locked up. I feel a lil' responsible for getting him in gangs and locked up..

-Grumpy

From The Beat: If you could turn back time would there be anything you'd say to try and keep your friend from hanging in the 'hood? It seems like you kind of pushed him into this, so it's time to pull him back.

Locked Up

Got me feelin' like I'm locked up in a single-cell casket. I want to break out, but I don't want to chance it. I can't go to sleep 'cause my mind wanders deep. All I could do is peep out the window of my cell, Wondering when I'll get my mail. This is going out to the homeboys in jail. Keep your head up and eyes on the prize. Keep working out to build up size. Smile now and save the cries for later. Middle finger up to all them haters.

-Vato

From The Beat: OK you are all about empowering your readers, but about the ending though, instead of flipping off all of the haters why don't you prove them wrong by your positive action?

Honesty

I would want my family telling me everything... Like how they really feel about me to how much they look up to me!! I would want to know my mistakes I made so I'll be able to fix them, if I can, and prevent them from happening again...

-Tenesha

From The Beat: You could always bring up this topic with your family and start the conversation. We think it's great that you're willing to take advice from your family members, too many of us take constructive criticism to the heart.

Trying to Pass

What's cracking, Beat? It's that homie from San Jose. Well, I'm not feeling the topic so I'ma go off.

So I got sentenced like last week and they're sentencing me to The Ranch. I already failed The Ranch like three times and I'm going back. I'm gonna try to pass it, but sometimes my posse ways get to me. Well, I'm gonna try to pass for my mom and family because I haven't been out since April. Also, I wanna say stay up and stay cool and stay out of trouble.

-P

From The Beat: Do you think that you could set aside your ways so you can finally get out of the hall and camp? Where do you see yourself headed in life if you keep on reverting back to the actions that lead you into incarceration?

On My Way To County

Well, I think I was a bad influence to my lil' cousin because he always watching the things that I do with my homies, and he try to look like us. But I always told him it's bad for him. But for me everything is cool. You know why? Because I love the streets and the streets love me.

Well Beat, this is gonna be my last time in here. I'ma get out next week on my birthday. I'ma be 19 years old, so next stop is county, but I ain't trippin'. I been there already.

So this is it. So to all the homies doing time in this juvi, keep you head up and don't let nobody disrespect you. Alratos.

-Lil' Ghost

From The Beat: How can a street love you or anything? Streets have no hearts; they're not capable of any kind of emotion. No, the street doesn't love you, but your love of the street has taken you away from it. Doesn't that seem like a contradiction to you? By "loving" it you can't have it! We're not sure what "respect" means to you, but it's hard for us to understand how allowing strangers to control your life — tell you what and when to eat, when to bathe, what to wear — shows respect for yourself. Good luck in county, and write us about what you find there and beyond. You can always be a part of The Beat.

Her

Pack my pipa full of grieffa, just like my woman
 I could never leave her,
 Cheat her need her.
 So I take a puff and another puff, exhale,
 Then I take a breather 'cause I'll take my time and do it right.
 I know where I'll be tonight,
 Clouding the night in my mind, feeling fine.
 This is mine, you want to get high?
 Well, come back another time when you really want to fly
 'Cause I plan to take it to the point where I don't know my name, won't even know where I'm at
 But I want to come back to this place
 Where I sit rather your lips will take a hit prepare for licked.
 Bring the pipe or a spliff, I hit is swift
 God's gift to this world got me in a twirl, in a whirl
 Everything I see is plural.
 I'm just blazing, hallucinating and I can't lie,
 Smoking crepa, chocolate tie, lemon drops falling from my eye
 Take to the sky on my natural high till the day I die.

(Chorus)

Take to the sky of the natural high
 Loving you more till the day I die
 Take to the sky of natural high loving you more.

-Candyman

From The Beat: This is a very descriptive flow. Is smoking something you do on a regular basis? Smoking may seem harmless to you now but what about later on in your years when your memory starts to fade and your life begins to slow down and you have not accomplished much? There are better ways to have fun, and the benefits of not smoking are tremendous! Imagine remembering all of the fun times without, "I don't remember that day, I was so high!"

I've Always Wanted To...

I've always and still do want to travel around the world.
 I think it would be fun to go every where you never imagined, to go and see many different things...

-Tenesha

From The Beat: Where would you go, and whom would you bring along with you? Would you ever want to live in another country?

Dreams

In my dreams I do crazy things: chasings, stabbings, shootings, I get excited when I do crimes. They say I'm "bad", that's right, no regrets 'cause I'll do it 'til the very end. I start to talk to the devil, he tells me "retaliation is a must" when you play with me, then I wake up and I see all these white walls

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: How do your dreams make you feel when you wake up? Why do you think your mind wanders to images of pain and brutality when you close your eyes for the night?

Family First

I miss my family. I miss my mom and dad and lil' brothers. I think about them every day in here. I want to go home and be with my family again.

-Sunny

From The Beat: It's painful to be separated from those we love. We hope when you get home — and you will — that you remember what you're feeling now so you won't be tempted to do the things that lead here and away from there...

C-Level Monday

What's good, Beat? This Shorty. Yup I'm finally off C-level. Damn, I was on c-level for three weeks. One Monday, I got C-level for a picture I wasn't suppose to have.

Then the next Monday C-level for tagging on my door. But yeah, the next Monday I got C-level again for a pencil.

But shhh now I finally broke that C-level Monday curse by finally making it to A-level and not getting C-level this Monday. Well yeah, I just wanted to say that damn it sucks being on C-level and I'm happy to be off. It reminded me off when I was in the Max on that structure program for two months.

Well, I just want to say that I ain't a C-level soldier no more and now I'm an A-level soldier now. Well, much love to all in here. Well that's all for now.

-Shorty

From The Beat: We can see that you don't like C-level, so why do things that will get you to C-level? Messing up in the hall will just make your stay even more difficult, so why not just go by the rules now so that you can get out sooner? We hope that everything goes great for you, but you seriously have to start reevaluating what you want with yourself before the game sucks you in.

Honest Appraisal

If my friends and family were willing to tell me how they honestly thought of me, I would want them to. I think they would probably tell me I should start doing better in school.

Even though the truth hurts I still would want them to tell me because I wanna change for my family and also for myself, too. I want to make something of myself and prove everyone wrong, that I'm gonna be somebody. I don't want to be misunderstood.

-Isabella

From The Beat: This is a great piece, Isabella; we know that you'll prove all the haters wrong! There will always be people that doubt you and it's your job to prove to them and yourself that you are more than what they think.

Bad Influences

Well, one time I was with my friends and we were at the store and I did something and she started doing it, but I really don't blame myself because she did not have too do it. So I wouldn't say it was a bad influence 'cause she did not have to do it and by the way she was way older then me so it was not my fault.

-Irene

From The Beat: Just because someone is older than you doesn't mean that they'll be their own leader all the time. Just because someone is older or younger doesn't mean that they can't be a bad influence on their peers. If you were really her friend then you would have stopped her when you saw her copying your same actions. The way you act effects everyone around you, old and young, age is never a factor.

My Friends Are Bad Influences

Bad influences...my friends that I hang around with are the bad people, man. Now, my friends were doing bad stuff so then I said, "Well, I should," now I'm doing things.

Now I am in the hall so now, when I get out, I got to think two times before I act so I would not end up in the wrong place.

-Fernando

From The Beat: Now that you know that your friends influence you in a bad way, will you still be friends with them when you get out? Real friends will try to influence you to do good things with your life and to succeed with yourself. You have a lot of thinking to do, because if you stay on the same path that you're on, then you will always end up in the wrong place.

When I Get Out

Hey Beat, how is it going? Well, first time writing. Well, today I don't feel any of these topics. Well, today I'm going to write about what I'm going to do when I get out.

I'm going to do all these programs so they can help me. I'm going to stay away from all my homies for a while because all I see they just get me in here and don't write or nothing. I'm also going to spend a lot of time with my family because they are the ones that are there for me when I get locked up.

I'm also going to see my lady, she is 18 and I can't wait to see her and hold her in my hands and tell her how much I love her and I miss her. She has a lil girl that is barely born. She isn't my daughter but when I get out I'm going to look at her as my daughter. To all the homies in this place keep your head up high, some day we'll get out.

-Youngster

From The Beat: You have a lot of great plans for yourself! Sometimes we have to keep clear of our friends because our friends don't always support us in our decisions. Hopefully the homies will see your example and take your lead. What will you do to make sure you follow through with your plans and not end up back in the hall?

My Fun

Hey Beat, what's up today? I'm going to write to you about gang banging in the streets. Well, from my point of view gangbang is fun, to kick it with all the homies and getting a lot of girls.

It's not all fun and games like when you have to put in work and when you are kicking it with the homies you have to watch out for the cops that try to creep to catch us slipping.

-Youngster

From The Beat: What do you mean by "you have to put in work", Youngster? Why do you think you joined a gang? Is your incarceration a result of the "work" you had to put in for your set? When you get out will you still run with your clique or will you try to do better for yourself?

Hangin' With The Wrong Crowd

Yeah, I've been in trouble for being with the wrong people. That's why I am kinda in here but if you just don't hang out with the wrong people then you wont get in trouble.

So just watch out who you chill with so you wont get in trouble.

-David

From The Beat: This is good advice to give to your friends and peers, David, but will you take your own advice?

Because Of Me

I bet plenty of people get in trouble because of me. If it's not the weed, the drink, the coke, maybe is the ecstasy?

Kids get caught with lots of things today. I supply, they consume, they leave and then come soon. I distribute and stay clean, I sell dirt and you make steam.

Keep on coming, you naïve. Now I'm trapped in a hole ready to call it quits... Not! Business never ends, stay strong and up 'til the end. Thanks for being supportive, I will thank you back for those stacks.

-Eil

From The Beat: Why do you think you sell drugs to your peers, Eil? Have you ever thought of the people whose addictions you feed? That dope fiend is someone's son, daughter, mother, father, brother or sister. Imagine if that was your child? How would you feel?

My Sunshine

I'm not liking today's topic so I'm gonna do a little poem to my son and girl.

Sunshine blue sky, please come back to me
My girl can't find another and she's come back to me.
With or without, our future our life is still the same
So day after day,
We stay locked up in my room
Because I know for us our life is still the same.
That is for you baby and you junior. Love you babe.

-Baby Boy Joseph Sr.

From The Beat: You should send this to your children, we know they would love it.

What I Want To Do

One Thing I've always wanted to do is go to Vietnam for some reason and learn their language and try something new, not just the same old thing.

-Irene

From The Beat: What an exotic place to choose to go. What made you choose Vietnam?

What My Friends And Family Think Of Me

I would want my family to tell me my faults and my strengths.

My mom would say that I have made some mistakes in my life. She would also say that I am a hard worker and I do the best I can, at mostly everything I do.

My dad would say that I need to learn from my mistakes and the mistakes I have made, I would have to deal with the consequences. And a good thing he would say about me is that I look out for my family no matter what.

My girlfriend would say that I have made a couple mistakes in the past but I made up for them and I was a good boyfriend ever since.

-Yung Cash

From The Beat: We hope that you take the advice of your parents and girl and stay out of the hall, Yung Cash! We also hope that you learn from your mistakes because too many of us forget about our past instead of learning from it.

This Country Made Me

Our people set in our own ways
Same O' shhh day after day.
But our people demands respect
And there's a lot of things our parents expect,
Coming to a country that's foreign to us
Looking for people that we can trust.
Tired of war and our gun being loaded,
Tired of looking up, a bomb just exploded.
So we come over here for a peaceful life,
Work as hard as we can do what's right.
Parents send our kids to a school,
Everything is nice, at first.

But one day we come home running, crying, and hurt.
We got beat up, 'cause we're from the Asian race
So now our kids write
To give them a taste of what it is like
A real war and get even and even the score.

-Chris

From The Beat: We can feel your frustration in this piece, and we commend you for writing it out instead of lashing it out. We'd love to hear more!

Need A Lady To Stand By Me

Well, most homies they all seen the same, violent ways and no shame, but I need a gangster girl in my world. Baby, I'll treat you right because I'm tired of them lonely nights and it's never been coo' for me but you're the real deal, the most finest in my eyes. Some girls duck and dodge me 'cause they can't handle my gangster ways. People tell me I need a girl to support me with this gangster life but I want a lady, not a girl. What I need is a ride or die chick to watch my back when I'm out banging to the fullest, to catch me when I fall. I don't know why but I want this girl so much it gots me going crazy.

I got a hand full of females but all I want is gangster girl to be real and to hold me and to be there for me. You know, when times get hard and when they get rough you were always there. Me and you together face all kinds of weather. Without you I wouldn't know what to do but I know you will always be there for me. The way you carry yourself, the way you act I love it all, even though I'm just a homie from the hood.

I said luckily you fell in with a G. I can't wait to get home. I hope I see you soon. Knowing night after night up in this four wall room I just sit and think about nothing but you, but baby won't you ride with me? Be by my side never leave me? I need a girl not just to have someone to change up my world. Settle down even though I'm known on the streets that I'm a player. I need you not to trip while I handle my business, so let me do what I have to do. Money doesn't bring happiness forever that's why I need you to come and make everything better. So baby get to know me and hold me, be there for me girl and never leave me lonely.

-Pelon

From The Beat: Wow, it's great that you know what you want in your girl. If you do come across a woman with the qualities you're looking for, then what? Since she'll accept your "gangster ways" do you think you'll ever get out of this type of life? Having a girl who is down for you is one thing but if she doesn't care enough to say, "Hey, you're going to end up locked up for your whole life if you keep going this way," then she doesn't really love you. How can you be with someone now if you don't even care where your own life is going? You've got to care about yourself before you go out and look for someone else to care about. We hope that you realize sooner rather than later that you're better than this "gangster life".

What's The Point?

What's good, Beat? Well, I got sentenced to life skills and I get out in April and my social worker wants me to go to Colorado and do six more months.

I think that's messed up 'cause what's the point of getting sentenced to life skills if they gonna send me to another program when I get out? They should've just sentenced me to that program instead.

-Lauren

From The Beat: How do you feel about your social worker making these important decisions for you? If you were given a choice to write an essay explaining why you think you shouldn't go to Colorado then what would you say?

Wasting My Time

I think being in juvenile hall is such a waste of my time, it is so boring in here. I could be on the outs chilling with my homeboys but instead I am in here doing time for something stupid. Hell no, it wasn't worth it.

-S

From The Beat: Juvie really is a waste of your time, if you are not learning from the experience. When you get out will you keep on doing the things that you do or will you change your life around? If you really, really want to change then you'll have to do something now before it's too late!

The Olympics

One thing that I've always wanted to do is to go to the Olympics and win a gold medal.

I was messing around before and smoking weed during the track season and messing up my lungs, but to win and be the best would feel better than any drug in the world. Plus that shhh comes with it's own benefits.

-Matias

From The Beat: These are great aspirations, once you get healthy. Maybe you can make this dream into a goal. Anything is possible, Matias, and we have faith in you to go and run after your goals or is that the gold? Why not!

Let Me Out Of This Dump!

Living life in this mug is bootsie as hell. Getting up at 7 going to sleep at 12. Phones is broke, food is garbage, the clothes stink, shoes have holes. This is a dump.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: If jails were designed like resorts, people would be lined up on the outside trying to get in instead of lining up on the inside trying to get out. When you do get out, people will think you must like it here if you come back.

I'm a Bad Influence

I think I'm a bad influence 'cause every day I use drugs in front of my little homies and I think they are doing drugs now 'cause of me. But I always told them to be good and to not use drugs 'cause drugs makes you feel like shhh, like crystal meth makes you see things and hear voices.

So that's all I got for today.

-Lil Vago

From The Beat: Even though you did drugs you still cared enough to give valuable advice to your young homies. Even though, you said that you think they are doing drugs now, why do you think that is? Maybe it's because they looked up to you as a mentor, a figure to mold themselves after? Maybe if they see you changing for the better then they will follow suit and change too!

My Homie

What's cracking, Beat? Pues, this is Hersheys, once again I'm waiting for my release date. I got sentence January 5th and I got 120 days Life Skills, I get out April 8th, hopefully.

Well, today I'm not feeling the topic; today I want to talk about the homie, Temper, from my hood. Pues, while I was thinking about my release date the homie crossed my mind, he's here at the hall. He's been here almost 1 year and half, pues, the homie is fighting a couple of years. It's gonna be a while before he gets out, hopefully he gets out so he could get to see his son grow.

Pues, I want to tell you, carnal, to always keep your head up. Yeah, there might be times you think the homies don't care about you or anything but they do. The homies always talk about you. Some try to get your directa so they could show you some love, you know. Don't think we forgot about you, carnalito. Pues, sorry for not showing you some love, it's because I keep coming back but that's gonna change.

Pues, keep your head up, carnal, I got to go because I'm on detail. Take care and keep your head up.

-Hersheys

From The Beat: You're a very good friend, to worry about your homeboy even though you have your own plate to deal with. When you get out do you think your lifestyle will change the same or will you try turning your life around? WE like to think Temper wants the best for you, even if that means a major change in your lifestyle. A real friend will help his friend for the better, not for the worst. Stay up and we wish the best to you and our friend Temper.

Kitsunians Rising, Chapter 1

It was before sunrise when Jekan Blazer woke up. He got out of bed and stretched. Today was the day that the boy enlisted into Kitsunian Academy of Tactical Combat (or K.A.T.C. for short), which taught fighting techniques more advanced than that of the planet's most elite forces. The K.A.T.C. was recruiting young, healthy adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 to train for classified causes.

Excited, Jekan had volunteered at the age of twelve, hoping to be accepted. Now, after a long 3 1/2 years of waiting, he received a phone call at precisely 9:00 the previous night. It directed him to arrive at the K.A.T.C. at no later than sunrise. Alone. Jekan donned his brand new camouflage combat uniform and black combat boots which were supplied by the Academy.

After getting ready, the boy stepped out of his warm, cozy house, and into the chill morning air. There was a heavy fog hanging all around him, making it difficult to see. It was so cold, that when he exhaled, a warm misty vapor hovered briefly in the air. There were icicles hanging from the snow covered trees from last night's storm. That meant that the river would be easier to cross, now that it was most likely frozen. Jekan glanced at his watch, which read 5:21 A.M. Sunrise was at 6:02 A.M. Even if he were to run harder and longer than ever before, he wouldn't make it there on time. Unless, of course, he crossed the river, and that would only be possible if it was frozen. Jekan realized he was shivering violently. He also knew by just standing there he was just wasting his precious time. He took a deep breath, and set off towards the K.A.T.C.

After a grueling thirty-two minutes of nonstop running he came to the river, which happened to be frozen. Jekan carefully crossed it, and when to the bordering wall of the K.A.T.C. He knew there was a weak spot in the barrier, and found it without a problem. The youth kicked at it until he was able to put a hole in it. When the wall was breached, he expected various alarms to sound. None did. When he looked at his watch, he was shocked to find that he only had twenty-six seconds left. He quickly climbed through the hole, ran towards the doors of the academy, and tagged them. As soon as he did, the first rays of sunlight crept upon him. The boy had barely made it.

Once he caught his breath, Jekan looked around. His first impression was how big the K.A.T.C. actually was, which was about as big as a small town. He turned about 90 degrees, only to find a pile of black camouflage clothing under a nearby tree. Curious, the boy moved closer to investigate. Once he was near the pile, Jekan saw that they were breathing. That's when he realized; the pile of garments was in fact a female in similar K.A.T.C. attire that he was wearing. She just sat there, appearing to be asleep. When Jekan stepped close to wake her, she sprung into a front flip, landing only inches from his face. Startled, he stumbled backward and fell on his back. She walked around to his head, and bent down to look him in his face. Her long, shiny, jet black hair dangled down near the ground. The young lady's emerald green eyes sparkled at him as she flashed a dazzling smile.

The woman greeted him warmly, saying, "Welcome to the K.A.T.C., Jekan! I'm so glad you made it here! My name is Novann, and I will be your trainer. Please follow me."

Before he could respond, Novann whirled around to face the building, her hair whipping at his face. She went straight to the doors of the academy, flung them open, and entered the building. He quickly followed her inside, knowing the doors would lock if they close on him.

When he got in, he took several steps, and stopped to check out the inside of the K.A.T.C. It was like a normal dojo, only more advanced. There were training sites everywhere.

They ranged from hand to hand combat, to sniping, to even experimenting with plasma and laser weapons. The walls were dark red in color, and were in mind-boggling condition. The lighting was perfectly arranged and flawless in the intensity of brightness. Yet Jekan felt like something was missing and it bothered him.

About ten minutes later, he realized what was missing; the students. The next thing he noticed turned his blood to ice. The youth couldn't believe he had overlooked the most obvious, not to mention deadly, detail earlier. Each and every trainer that was moving about the place had an assault rifle, a pistol, or both. His mind reeled, and he started for the doors, when he heard someone shout, "Hey!" Panicking, he broke into a run. Suddenly, a projectile slammed into the middle of his back with enough force to send him about five feet through the air, tumble another three feet, and finally crash with a sickening thud into the three inch thick solid steel double doors. Jekan twitched a few times while he lay at the base of the doors, seeing, watching, but unable to move. The dojo flickered, and disappeared entirely; it was just an illusion.

"What, haven't you ever seen a biogenetic engineering laboratory before? Pity..." asked Novann with her hands on her hips. Her voice was colder than ice.

Jekan gasped, (if you could call it that,) "What do you want with me?"

He was slurring his words badly, and struggling to keep consciousness. The boy then noticed a blue glow in the wall off about fifty feet away. Behind the glow were five deformed humanoid shapes. That very moment, he blacked out.

Chapter 2

Jekan woke up on a cold steel table that was stained with dark red blood, and also with gooey, bright blue and green spots. The walls were solid concrete, were covered with the same blue and green goop, and had deep gashes and bullet holes everywhere. He tried to get up, but couldn't: his arms, legs, ankles, wrists, waist, and chest were all fasted to the table by one-inch-thick, semi flexible metal.

Panicked, he started to struggle, when he heard Novann's icy voice say, "it's no use Jekan, you will never break free. Those bands are made with our own secret unbreakable metal. You think you can escape, don't you? Good luck with that, this place is a fortress. You will never make it out of here alive."

His only words were, "Watch me."

"Jekan, I would love to see you try."

He remained silent and Novann turned her back to him, clanking around with something that sounded like glass. He hadn't the faintest idea of how he was going to break free of the K.A.T.C., but was determined to do whatever was necessary to do so. Suddenly, the noise ceased.

"Well, Jekan, are you ready?" Novann asked nonchalantly.

"Ready for what" he demanded.

She slowly turned around. In her left hand was a cylindrical device with a red button on the top of the gadget. It was approximately three inches tall, an inch in diameter, and golden in color. She held the mechanism vertically with her thumb on the button. In the other hand was a large hypodermic needle filled with the same gooey, gel-like, bright blue green substances that were splattered everywhere. There was a divider going down the middle of the tube, segregating the blue from the green. The tube was three inches in diameter, and was six inches long. It had a white label on it, which read in bold, black letters, "TF #231".

"Ready for what?" Jekan repeated fiercely.

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"For your transformation." Novann stated, her voice falsely sweet.

"My WHAT!?" He shouted, struggling once again.

Novann didn't answer. Instead, she plunged the acicular needle into the center of the squirming boy's chest. Jekan screamed in pain as the woman injected him with the substances the tube held inside. He became dizzy and disoriented. On top of that, the youth could feel the goop ooze slowly through his veins. His body spasmed once, twice, and then a third time. Novann then pressed the button on the golden device in her left hand. Immediately after she did, the metal strips that bound the boy to the table straightened upwards, and the slid into the slab of steel, releasing him.

Jekan, still twitching, sputtered, "Why? Why me?"

With that, he blacked out.

"To the holding cell with you." Novann spat at the unconscious body.

She pressed another button that was on the side of the golden mechanism. The table split in half, falling on hidden hinges, causing the body to fall into the room under him.

As he fell, the falsehearted woman yelled after him, "Incoming!"

There was a dull thud as his body hit the concrete after ten feet of falling. Satisfied, Novann closed the trapdoor by pressing the side button again.

Jekan slowly started coming to. As his senses sluggishly returned, he heard voices talking to the left of him. Someone laughed loudly, and he groaned at the pain from the sound. The voices fell silent. He slowly opened his eyes and sat up even slower because it hurt to move. Something wasn't right. Unconsciously, the boy reached back and grabbed a big, bushy tail. It felt kind of like a fox tail. Then someone giggled. It was a female's giggle, and it sounded unusually familiar.

Her voice, also very familiar, said, "Awww, that's so cute! He grabbed his tail!"

More loud laughter followed the comment. Jekan turned to face the source of the voices, and gasped. What he saw was five humanoids, each with animal traits. Two were dragons, two were wolves, and the last was an arctic fox. The two pairs were male and female, and the fox was female. The male dragon was red, the female green, the male wolf had grey fur, the female had jet-black, and the arctic fox had a beautiful, glistening white coat.

When Jekan took all this in, he screamed. The boy searched for a way to escape, when he saw the blue glow in the wall that he saw when he was on the floor at the entrance. It finally struck him that he was in a holding cell.

The grey wolf asked in his gruff voice, "Hey, Kriana, when do you think he's gonna figure out that he's been transformed into an arctic fox, just like you?"

"Probably now Railen, considering the fact that you just told him!" Yelled the other wolf irritably.

"Wait...WHAT?" Jekan demanded, confused.

The red dragon sighed, and explained, "Alright, these are the facts. You have been altered into what Novann calls 'Super Soldiers'. We don't know what she has in store for us, but we do recognize she wants to use us to form an unstoppable army so she can take over and rule the world. We despise the term 'Super Soldiers', so we came up with the name 'Kitsunians'. You now have two options: either you join the Kitsunian side or the Super Soldier side; the choice is yours, so choose wisely. You have 5 minutes to decide."

Jekan thought back and remembered everything that Novann had done to him. He didn't want to join her, yet he didn't know if he could trust these humanoids. He looked at the gloomy face of the arctic fox, and made up his mind.

"Your time is up. What is your decision?" The male dragon asked harshly.

"I want to join the Kitsunians." Jekan stated firmly

Chapter 3

The crimson dragon had introduced Jekan to the Kitsunians in order of breed (starting with the females's name, then the male's). The dragons' names were Crystal and Blake, the wolves' names were Luna and Railen, and the vixen's name was Kriana. It took Jekan more than five minutes to realize he knew Kriana; she was his missing girlfriend.

"Kriana!" He blurted out loudly.

Perplexed, she cautiously asked, "What?"

The booth looked desperately at her, tears streaming down his face, and stammered, "Don't you remember me?"

She seemed to be completely thrown off guard, not to mention scared.

"...I don't know what you're talking about."

Jekan looked devastated, but he didn't give up.

"I remember the way you used to lay you're head on my shoulder at night, the way you used to whisper into my ear that you loved me, and how could I forget those beautiful, emerald green eyes, Kriana Inara"

He looked up at her and smiled the same loving smile he showed her before Kriana was abducted.

"Jekan? Jekan, is that you?" Kriana asked carefully.

He just kept smiling. She stood up ever so slowly, and walked cautiously over to the smiling boy.

While circling him, she thought, 'He is an eerie reminiscent of Jekan, but could it be him?'

Then she had an idea: ask him a couple questions about herself.

"Okay, if you know me that well, then what's my favorite animal?" Kriana asked.

Jekan answered immediately, "The Arctic fox. During the winter, its coat is the most beautiful in your opinion."

"Okay, what's my birth date?" She demanded.

Again, the answer was instantaneous, "January 13th, 2075, which makes you 17 years old."

Already knowing it was Jekan, Kriana whispered, "What's our code word?"

"Kitsune Inara." He breathed.

"Oh my gosh."

They embraced, tears streaming down their faces.

"Are you two done yet? We really need to discuss some majorly important shhh," Railen fumed impatiently.

They all stared at him, waiting for him to finish. When he didn't, Jekan got perturbed.

"What could be so God damned important that you have to break the peace!?" He shouted.

"Well, for starters, what's our plan?" Railen shot back.

Unexpectedly, the room dimmed. The glowing blue wall had disappeared. Before anyone could blink, a grenade flew in the room. It immediately began glowing bright white, and within seconds was blinding. Then, the ball of glowing plasma suddenly began to screech at such a high frequency, it could only be heard by the Kitsunians. They rolled on the floor with fingers in their ears, screaming in agony.

The bright white light subsided, but not the piercing shriek that was causing the most anguish.

"Oh sure they can end the light show, no problem! But the sound? Forget about it!" Jekan thought bitterly.

And as abruptly as the sound begun, it ceased to exist.

"What...the fark...was that?" Railen asked slowly.

-Kitsune

From The Beat: This is a great story, Kitsune, if only it were finished. Do you plan on writing as a career? You have such potential, don't waste it behind bars, and or doing thigns that get you in trouble. We look forward to hearing the rest!

The Value of a Life

The value of life to me is priceless, there ain't nothing that can go up against life itself. But today people are putting a price number on other people just to get money and try to be rich and be on top of other people.

Murder leads to anger and violence and more murder is because people pick up on things and think it is ok. So people shoot and think it is ok or maybe they are born in a life that is only faced with it and there is nothing that they can do about it. But life is very valuable and very fragile so watch what you speak and what you see.

-Lovin' Life

From The Beat: Yes, life is a very valuable, irreplaceable thing and it's so sad when you hear about the murders going on in our cities. What do you think we could do to lower the murder rate and hopefully, eliminate it?

One's Vida

Hey what's up, Beaters? Pues, this is that vato Lil' Silent once again dropping some lines to all who are reading.

Pues, the topic for today is the value of one life. Pues, Simon there's vida's that are worthy and some that don't even deserve to stay on this earth 'cause most people do a lot of bad things to others, that's why it's kind of good when people die. Well, the ones that do all the crazy shhh pero ey some of us live by the gun and die by the gun and that's all we will ever know, kill or be killed.

-Lil' Silent

From The Beat: Your life doesn't have to be surrounded by this kill or be killed mentality. Yes, the neighborhoods that some of us live in create this type of atmosphere but you don't have to adopt it! We make our own choices and it might be hard to go against what everyone says but it's YOUR life that is on the line, not theirs. There's more to life than this, you have to strive for a better life because a better life isn't going to just walk in on you.

Lost Someone

What's up, Beat? Me nothing, just bored. But yeah, I want to say what's up to all the homeboys doing time, keep your head up. But yeah, I'm going I'm going to write about how girls can't wait for homeboys doing time.

That's messed up how girls say they're down for us when we are out but when we are locked up they ain't no where to be found. But yeah, to all the homeboys that lost a girl don't trip she ain't the one but she's out there, keep your head up.

-Memo

From The Beat: We know how hard relationships can be and it gets eve harder when you aren't able to see each other everyday. You're still young, Memo, you have your whole life to worry about girls. Right now, you should worry about staying out of juvie once you're out so that the girls will stay instead of go.

Is This Daycare?

Q-vole Beat, the other day I was thinking about all the values staff have in J-Hall. They do all the studies in college but what is the use if they can't even use it? Staff, they don't even do any kind of work they learn in college, it's just like they baby-sit us and we're like in a "daycare".

I think it's just one of the worthless jobs and that's my opinion, it's just money that's making them work here.

-BinLaden

From The Beat: There are staff at the juvies who want to be there to help you and give you good advice and then there will be staff members that are just there for job experience, this is how it is at every job. When you get out maybe you'd like to look in to becoming a Juvenile Hall counselor or Staff member? Again, at every job, there are bad apples.

The Value of One Life

I believe that out lives aren't worth more or less than one another. The reason why a single murder (like the one on New Years) is a big deal, is not, I repeat, is NOT - worth more than anyone else's. It's because something like that isn't expected. The young people murdering is not news anymore. That doesn't make one life worth more, it just means that we have new news each day.

Peace out.

-Kitsune

From The Beat: You're right, Kitsune, everyone's life has value, not just one person. Why do you think a murder in the suburbs gets more publicity than a murder in the city?

One Thing I'd Like to Do

One thing I'd like to do is travel all around the world. Probably to all the states and then a few countries like Italy and Brazil and what ever comes in my path.

-Jacklyn

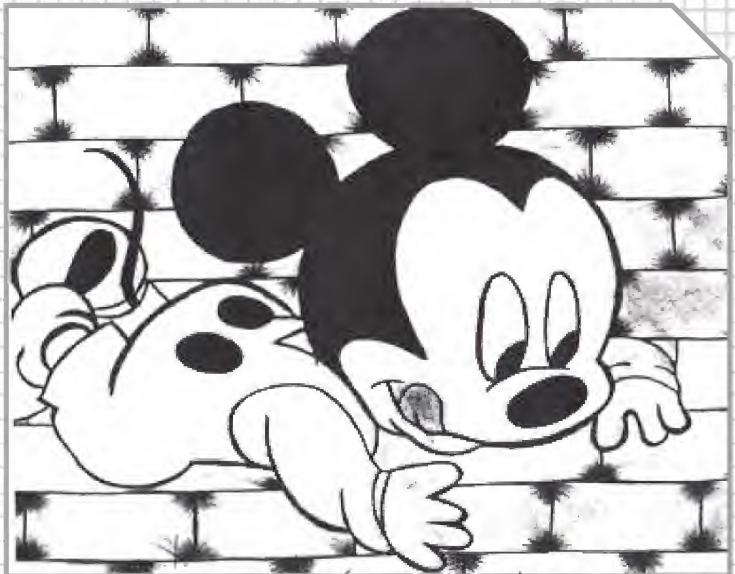
From The Beat: What do you think you have to do to make these dreams possible?

One Thing I Would Like

One thing I would like to do is live forever. I want to have eternal life and live through out generations to come. I want to see what the future is bringing to us. I want to live and have a family and be alive until earth has its last day to live. I want to see GOD come down and save us again, as GOD did in the past.

-Adriana

From The Beat: What do you think the world would be like if everyone were able to live forever?



Turning 18 in The Hall

What's up, Beat? Well, I'm about to be 18 tomorrow, and it sucks because I'm here when I could be on the outs chillin' with my family and my girl, but there's always next year.

Well that's it for today, I really don't know what else to write. Until next time, I'm out.

-Mikeyo

From The Beat: Yes, Mikeyo, there is always next year but what will you make of it?

Swagger Like Me

Verse 1:

What it do? You know I gotta stop these wannabes
 Claiming they got lyrical capabilities,
 Talk all that shhh you'll end up in the infirmary.
 Due to all the inflected injuries,
 All these suckas end up as casualties.
 Now the temperature is set to a thousand degrees
 And I'll spit 'til I got no more energy in me.
 Can you keep up or are you gonna fall like my enemies?
 Don't you see, I'm 6-foot black and Mexican and I'm only
 17?
 Raised in the streets laced up by them OG's,
 I can see through your personality and tell that you're
 phony.
 Ha-ha, these playas make me laugh, "not giggle"
 And I'm listening but I don't hear no whistle.

Chorus:

Who in The Beat Within got swagger like me?
 Swagger like me,
 Swagger like me?

Verse 2:

My grill top notch, just my girl 10 out of 10,
 Diamonds on the cross of my necklace,
 The watch on my wrist is timeless
 'Cause time don't mean shhh when you're rich.
 A topless car with hydraulics, now that's nonsense
 What you need to do is put that bucket on Craig's List
 Or just give it up to the circus.
 Let me ask you, who's Lil' Savage? (150 Beat writer)?
 Another cat that needs some practice.
 The fact is I'm laughing at you kid,
 Look, I'm massive when it comes to the sense of rappin'
 I got a suggestion for ya quit actin'.
 Check it, you're predictable with no swagga,
 Your get up is a disaster
 So what you need to do is bow down to your master.
 I'm already on top looking down and you're just a factor
 Wait, I still got another question to ask ya

Chorus:

Who in The Beat Within got swagger like me?
 Swagger like me,
 Swagger like me?

Verse 3:

Well this the third and last verse so listen,
 You know this the part where I start dissin'
 Because lil' homeboy says he's from the Mission.
 Take a tour through my hood and see how I'm livin',
 My village, more than just a ghetto ambition.
 I got heart and soul and that's what you're missin',
 And this rap ain't over recognition.
 One way trip straight to prison,
 Naw, that's irrelevant 'cause I'm intelligent
 And I'm confident that I'll never see a cell again,
 I'ma be on the outside looking in.
 This ain't no gimmick I'm just gifted.

-Chico

From The Beat: We see that you've read some of the flows from Lil Savage of Alameda County. Chico. Maybe next time, instead of busting his chops, even though we are sure he asked for it, you could give him some pointers to help his flow. Even better, instead of writing a negative flow (that's too easy) you could write a piece with advice to beginning rappers! You could call it "Rapping 101". WE look forward to hearing more from you!

One Thing

One thing I always wanted to do was make my girl the happiest she can be.

I've tried and I'll say I've done a damn good job but when I say I want to make her the happiest that means that I need to stay outta here. She loves me and misses me and as of right now she's sad. So I need to do this tiempo and get back to my mission, which is to make her happy.

-Johnny

From The Beat: That's sweet of you, Johnny, but you have to stay out of juvie for yourself also!

Sentenced and Mad

I'm hella mad because on Dec. 10th that's when I got the worst news ever. I got sentenced to 6 months and a strike Life Skills; I just hope time goes by fast.

It's going hella slow with my boy J, he's a hella boring roommate, he don't wanna ever do shhh. But it's coo' we got the same consequence so we can relate and we go to choir and all the other programs together so we got something to talk about.

But I really just want to hibernate these six months away but don't think it's possible. Wish I could also turn back the hands of time and fix the situation I was in to get in here but I don't I really don't even know what I'm talking 'bout just writing, this lady is givin' me some candy to write.

-Keymonte

From The Beat: Why do you think that you received such a harsh sentence? How do you feel knowing that you're going to be in juvenile hall for 6 months? What's the plan upon getting out?

The Value of One Life

The value of one life...

Can it be measured?

Can it be judged?

Can you put a price on it?

A life is a precious thing that can't be replaced with another.

No two lives are the same so when you lose one it's gone forever.

That's why we need to appreciate things in other peoples lives
 as well as ours...precious life.

-Cisco

From The Beat: This is a short and simple piece, Cisco, but it speaks to us loud and clear! Great job!

Getting Out

What's up, Beat? This be the homeboy, Mikeyo, coming out of this unit. Well, I'm gonna be getting out next month if I'm not in the life skills unit within 29 days.

My trial went all right but it could've been better. Well yeah, when I get out I'ma do better for myself as an individual. Like, get a job and go back to school so I could help my moms out 'cause there's some struggles going on and it sucks 'cause I'm in here and I can't do nothing about it, but I can't wait to get out next month.

By the time this comes out I'll be out of this whack ass place. Well, that's it for today, Beat. Gone.

-Mikeyo

From The Beat: How will you make sure that these plans go through? What will you do to make sure that you don't make the same mistake that landed you in jail in the first place? We know that you can do it, Mikeyo, and we're rooting for you!

My Friend

My name Rufus. I smoke rocks
I live in between your toe
I pinch you as I pop out the cuts
I run around high and pick up cigarette butts
My girlfriend is a tranny
Her name is Sporty Spice
And she is nice

My best friend is a guy called "homie"
Me and him run around Las Vegas and party with
trannies
They are nice ladies
I robbed a bank
And now I walk around with a backpack full of crack

-Marine
From The Beat: Is any of this true? If so, what attracts you to "trannies"? If you rob banks, you end up in places like this, writing nonsense poems. But the poem is funny, so we don't mind. We wouldn't mind reading something serious from you, either...



I Can Feel Your Eyes

Those big bright eyes
Even if I can't see them
I feel them
Looking at me

You said I was perfect
The only thing you needed
Now you're so far
From everything you made

Come back and I swear
I won't leave your arms

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: The object of your love did not put you here; you put yourself here, which means that you allowed this separation to happen, whoever left the other "first." The most important relationship of your life is the one with yourself. When you are content with who you are, doing what you know you should be doing and avoiding what you know you should be avoiding, you will know that only you can make yourself, and then those arms of yours will find the right person to embrace, and to embrace you back.

Forced To Get Paid

I'm forced to get up
But I'm stuck
And I hate this
No breakfast on the table
Due to terrible conditions
I'm wishin' on a star
But I ain't gettin' far
Can't find myself a job
'Cause they say I look too hard
Scarred with all the damn drama
I gots to get paid in a hurry 'cause my girl's about to be a mama
So I'm gonna have to find a way
I got this homie who be ballin'
Let me call him up to see what he might say
Ring-a-ding-ding
Hello?
He answer the phone
I told him, "Wha's up?"
He said, "Meet me at the roller rink
Nine o'clock"
And I'm waiting
Then out of nowhere comes a cool '62 sitting on Dayton's
We greeted each other
Hit his fat ass up
Transaction going down
Ballas showing me love
I got this deal
It's perfect
Now I'm on the top
Trying hard to hella
Serve this shhh

-Oso Del Dark Room

From The Beat: Do you really think all that street drama you're into is putting you "on the top"? If this is on the top, we'd hate to see what's on the bottom! The fast route to get your money leads to a slow wait behind walls, while the world keeps on moving. Maybe it's time to show yourself a little love by not risking your life or your freedom... You're not getting paid, you're paying!

Marin County Juvenile Hall

Menacing
Capitalists
Joining
Hostilities

-Anonymous

From The Beat: If jails are a manifestation of capitalism, then why allow yourself to be the commodity that the system earns its living from? Who is hostile, you or them?

Value

I don't believe people all have equal value, albeit, I don't think there can be a value put on most people. My roommate says I say "trashy" too much. That is because that's mostly what I see nowadays.

I believe the world could do without a lot of people. Survival of the fittest does not take effect anymore, and I don't believe it's a good thing.

-Recycle Bin

From The Beat: The problem with thinking some people should be eliminated is that we all have our own lists of who those people should be. If each of us exercised a power to remove those we wanted eliminated, there'd be no one left! As for "survival of the fittest," it works as it always has worked. Darwin's theory doesn't mean that the smartest survive, or the strongest, or the most moral. He approaches it from the other end, defining those who survive as the fittest. Trash and trashy come from a way of thinking leading to a way of acting, so rather than eliminate it, how can we re-educate and teach and, by so doing, clean things up?

My Pain

My pain hurt like a child's birth
 Whom heel slow you just don't know
 At times I don't know what to say
 And all I do is pray day to day
 I feel my strength might die
 Like right now I'm trying hard not to cry
 Even though it's been two months
 But damn I still see it, I just don't believe it
 At times I bury like the cemetery
 Unworthy people paying beneficiaries
 A lot of people squeaking one girl's death
 Don't you worry, "Nish," I'm gonna ride 'til my last
 breath
 You killers cause a lot of devastation
 You have no idea what you did to this nation
 I really hate you, excuse my frustration
 But just when I'm 'bout to quit God tells me to
 Just hold on be strong . . . Things are gonna get better
 Rest in peace Cousin Nish

-Bing

From The Beat: You use some great similes in this poem! Great piece of writing! We are sorry to hear that your cousin passed away. Writing is a great way of coping with painful events and emotions, so keep it up!



Devil's Playground

Killing my dream before they start
 Taking my heart and ripping it apart
 My spirit is dead but I still walk around
 Not on the earth the devil's playground
 It's real, not fake I'm the real ghost writer
 Harming people all day pull an all nighter
 Scared for my life, but still live
 Am I God's child or the devil's kid
 Running around living life crazy
 I have already been named a demon baby
 One last time I received mail
 A letter that's saying I'm going to hell
 Laugh at it while I watch it burn
 I'm lost underground the point of no return
 I'm on fire with a hot head, too
 Here come the devil what should I do
 We all hear the saying what goes around comes around
 But I'll be back I'm playing on the devil's playground.

-Bing

From The Beat: You express a very intense struggle in this poem. What will you choose to pursue - good or evil? Don't let the negative things that people say about you bring you down. YOU are the one that will ultimately face the consequences of your choices. It's never too late to turn your life around and start making better choices for yourself.

From The Beat: We are always honored when we receive a package of writings from our colleagues in Maricopa County, Arizona. This is their latest contributions, as we look forward to reading more from our friends in the southwest this coming year.

My Shoes

Graduate from high school...
 ain't my shoes.
 Getting married later...
 ain't my shoes.
 Just one more time...
 ain't my shoes.

Made an excuse for me...
 in my shoes.
 Turned 20 tricks a day...
 in my shoes.
 Gave up on my life...
 in my shoes.

Excuses are old.
 Changing life is new.
 So, until you change from old to new
 you will never walk in my shoes.

-Mattique

From The Beat: Change is difficult, so it's great to see that you're leaving what's old behind and moving on to new, better experiences. Stay on track and stay positive and you'll start filling your shoes with accomplishments and along with that will come more happiness. Continue writing along the way...that'll help, too.

Tainted Smile

People only see the tainted smile from outside of you
 but don't see the depression, hatred & fear from inside
 of you then they smile back at you acting like they know
 you. Little did they know they don't even cure an inch of
 you because all they see is the tainted smile from outside
 of you.

-Bing

From The Beat: Well said. We've all probably experienced feeling like no one really knows what's going on inside of us. On the other hand, no one can really hope to understand you unless you give them an opportunity to know what's really going on inside of you. You may be surprised at how well they actually do understand! Until then keep writing! It's a great release for those hard-to-share feelings and experiences.

Fast Money Or New Beginning?

I had to stand on a two-way road and decide which street I would take. There were signs posted that said "Fast Money" and "New Beginning". I was a run away so I had no money, so I chose the "Fast Money" road thinking I was starting a new beginning. Little did I know that at the end of that road was hell awaiting. Not knowing that stilettos, miniskirts and coke would bring me to this cage that's not like home. Here for the tenth time and now I'm waiting to be picked up by ADJC for another month. Only if I would've taken the other road, my story to "The Beat" would have remained untold.

-Mattique

From The Beat: We live and learn. Learn being the key word here. You'll face many forks in the road on your journey ahead and hopefully when it's time to make a choice you'll stop and think about this lesson learned. Instead of choosing based on the now, think about what's ahead and usually you'll make better decisions. One day you'll stop, smile and say, "And I...I took the road less traveled by and that has made all the difference." And, it will feel good!

What Matters

There are many things that matter to me. Some of those things:

money, respect, your word.

Money: Without money you can't buy food to feed and support yourself and to clothe yourself. Money makes the world go 'round. Without money

you can't get a car, a house, or take out your girl

Respect: Give me respect and I'll respect you. To me, respect is very important. Without respect the world would be chaotic.

Your Word: Your word is like a promise to me. Your word represents your self. If I can't trust your word, then I can't trust you.

-Issa

From The Beat: Issa, you will discover other things, and things that are not things, that are also important. For instance - love. What could matter more than love? Good writing, by the way.

What I Feel About Obama

I feel Obama is perfect, in some ways, for our country. In other ways, he'll need help by Joe Biden. And I think it will be all good. I never wanted McCain to win. I could tell that he would have run the country into the ground, like Bush. We are already in big debt, and we need help.

-Dennis

From The Beat: Thanks for your opinion Dennis. Do you have any specific suggestions for our new president? What kinds of programs and innovations could his administration create that would be helpful to someone in your shoes. We'll pass your ideas along, if you take us up on this question.

Still Solid With Myself

To begin, I have been down for almost eight months. I'm just kickin' back, waiting for my release date in July. I'm still solid with myself. I recognize and am aware of how powerful my free-thinking can be. I miss my family, and my daughter.

As of now, I stand on a firm foundation. I'm determined to continue my progress toward a GED and to succeed in life.

-Juan

From The Beat: Keep reading and learning new words. You don't have to stop at a GED, unless you want to. You can go as far down the path of higher education as you desire. Cabrillo Community College is a great place to start. Think about it.

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Basically, this topic asks: what have I learned this year? To be completely honest, I've learned a lot, for the simple reason that I've been in here since January (of last year). Damn, it's been that long and it doesn't feel like it. I came here before my little boy was born. Since then I've only seen him seven times. And I haven't seen his mother (my baby's mama). So what I've learned is a lot. I have been educating myself in here. I miss my family, but I know I can't do anything about it, for the moment. But when I get out, I want to try, try my hardest to be a productive member out there.

I have learned a lot from my stay here. I took so much for granted and hope I can still make up for lost time, one day.

-Sinner

From The Beat: We recommend two books for you: *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, and, *Finding Freedom*. These books deal with that basic question: why am I alive - what's my purpose? If you'd like, we'll try to find you copies.

All I See

Brick walls and locked doors is almost all I see. But I still remain solid on this hard concrete, facing harsh realities, locked in a cage, away from family. We're prisoners of war, discrete mercenaries, not too different from today's military. Still hoping that one day I'll be released back to the streets. But I'm filled with rage, like a funky beast, because these authorities are all I see.

-Oscar

From The Beat: You'll have time to work your way toward a first class education, even though books and your own resourcefulness will be your teacher. When you feel rage - ask yourself what it is, where it comes from, what you can turn it into. There's a lot of power in rage. If you can translate that power into something useful, you can serve others, and yourself.

Sad Story

To begin with, this is a sad story from a sad man. Doing time, missing out, for a minute - sad and lonely I am.

But through all that I manage to stand tall, refuse to fall, for my life cause, the real battle, is inside. So, stay solid, lusty, impeccable, and prominent.

-Andres

From The Beat: Yes, you're right. What's going on inside that big brain of yours will, for the most part, determine how tall you stand or how low you fall. You are a very bright guy, and we know that you're serious about educating yourself. Keep reading and keep studying. It takes time to figure out what's really important, and you've begun the journey.

Up Again

Hey Beat, I'm up in this place again, and it sucks. But it is what it is. This is definitely a mistake I will never forget, and won't make again. It's a learning experience I'm sad for, but then grateful for - catching my mistakes before I get more serious consequences.

My plan for changing my life around is to make goal and to complete them. My first goal is to complete my program. The second goal is to get back into high school and graduate. And I want to complete the terms of my probation, and be free, and run my own life, smartly. I'm 18. I don't need probation. I've got family and my own brain with which to support myself, through my life.

-C

From The Beat: That's a good plan. We're glad you'll be getting a chance to put it into action.

Love Jesus

I love Jesus

I love Jesus

Even though I gangbang.

But the Lord run through my veins.

I love Jesus

I love Jesus

Even though I'm locked up always

Lord, but I still get on my knees every night

I pray that I'll be saved by the Lord

Each and every day I look to the sky

Wondering if the Lord hears my voice up high

Lord please hear me.

-Bing

From The Beat: Sometimes it's hard to keep our actions in line with our inner values and beliefs. Don't give up, though, because as you pick yourself up and continue trying you will find that slowly it gets easier to turn those values and beliefs into actions. Thanks for sharing with us!

Forgive. Friend. Angry. Mistake. Betray.

I went to the store to get some steak and the cashier said:

This is the bread store. You made a mistake.

Then I said: Oh, you must forgive. I gotta get some food so my family can live.

I wasn't angry. It was kind of funny.

So I went to the pet store to pet a bunny.

After that, I saw my friend.

He said his relationship had come to an end.

I told him what a rough day,

then he said: I can't believe my girlfriend would betray.

I said: What did she do?

He said: Not one guy, but more than two.

-B

From The Beat: We hope you secured your comestibles and offered solace to your friend. We hope the bunny appreciated your gentleness. Cool writing B.



A Song For The Beat

I'm rockin' to The Beat
with you lady,

I'm just rockin' to The Beat
with you baby...

rockin' to The Beat.

I'm rockin', no stoppin',
yall jocking my beat
while I'm on the street
bobbing, mobbing to The Beat.

Once a week
you catch me rockin'
to The Beat.

-M

From The Beat: We hear you. We're dancing. Can you see us? Did you catch that move?

What Do I Do

What do I do when I've hit cold stone rock bottom. They got me, once again. Now I'm trying everything I know to get out of here. I even pulled the rule book out of my back pocket. But they still got me in here, like a small locket.

Court's coming up soon. I hope the judge can see the real man in my body, who isn't a criminal but who needs help getting back into the program. I'm stuck in here with people of crimes, which is not me. I'm a user who yearns for help.

-Colton

From The Beat: When it comes to the help you're asking for, honesty is the first necessity. Acknowledge what you need and what you're hoping for. Resolve to be truthful. This poem is a good first step. Keep walking.

Life Quotes

- Life is a big fat cupcake – messy, but good in the end.
- Life is like sex. Even when it's not good, it's good.
- Life is like a roller coaster. Sometimes it's scary, but it's fun, feller.

-Mii

From The Beat: Would that be a cupcake made with organically grown whole grains? If so, please save one for us.

Goodbye To The Year

As I say goodbye to this year, I wonder what is coming in the New Year. I look back on my wrongs and rights. As I write this, it's funny to me. I have done too many wrongs in my life. Why? I need to do the right thing, whether it's holding the door open for an old woman, or just helping someone out.

-Issa

From The Beat: Lots of people say that finding a way to be of service to others is also a way to serve yourself. They say it makes them feel so good. Why do you think that is?

A Beautiful Neighborhood

A beautiful place in the neighborhood is the Avenue. There are liquor stores, places to eat, females to talk to, and the beach. This is like my paradise – kickin' it with the homies and doing big things. I love this place. It's never going to change. If anything changes, it's my cars and my females. I'm always going to live here.

-D

From The Beat: For a few seconds, we thought you were singing the words to that old Mr. Rogers song. But he wouldn't recognize the places you're talking about. We do, though. That you would describe liquor stores as part of the ingredients of paradise is a bit troubling. You're not old enough to walk into a liquor store. And while you can, one day, own a car, you can never "own" a female. We bet you wouldn't like the idea that someone could own your mother, or your sister, if you have one. But hey, we're in agreement with you about the beach. That's a heck of a beach.

What Matters

What matters to me is my freedom, and making my family and daughter proud. They are the most important people in my life, and I don't want to give them frowns. I want to make them proud of this vato. Changing my life is what I am going to do for my familia, daughter, and hyna. I am going to keep it true.

-Jaime

From The Beat: Freedom is always something you earn, with your behavior. We don't need to remind you that your behavior will need to change if you want the opportunity to make your family proud. If you need help, ask your counselor. It's a sign of strength and growth to ask for help when you need it. Think about it. Wouldn't you want a friend or a family member to ask for help, yours, or anyone's, if necessary?

Surprise

Surprise – wake up to the sunrise.

Look at the clock – already bombing Tupac.

Grab some coffee, and I'm out the door.

There's a wasp. I stomp it on the floor.

No doubt the game ain't no shame.

When I pass through, everyone knows my name.

I don't stress when I come to ruin.

A litter of bomb women is what I'm pursuin'.

-B

From The Beat: You and an army of young men. Keep those hormones in check, B. Spend them judiciously and keep writing. Clever poem. (Not that we agree with everything the voice in the poem has to say.)

Dreamin'

she has me thinkin' I'm in a dream,
She treats me like a King.
All I know is she's my one and only queen.
together we're fist ta do the finer things.
We go shoppin' hittin' up the mall.
She even puts minutes on the phone so I can call.
Mayne I'm sick of this hall,
all we get to do is play basketball.
I should have never ran.
All she wanted was a good man.
It's all good in the end though,
nothing can break us apart.
Cause I'm her love and she my heart.

-Lil' Phil

From The Beat: If you can have the patience to do what you know you have to do, what kind of life could you possibly build with her?

Life

What's up Beat man talking bout the value of one's life.
This world is turning to hatred. Lives are being taken away for even look-in at someone in a wrong way, saying some that's out of line.

Youngster's aint getting laced up the right way.
Nowadays everybody wanna go by their own rules. Aint nobody to trust, haters wanna envy. full of phonies from left to right. They try to be something they're not. They talk all that good shh but its all a sideshow. Step yo game up.

-Baby-c

From The Beat: Would you like to see the world turn away from hatred? Some say it has a chance with the new president, and that we need to all support that. We think we should try, we think it's possible to turn away from the hatred. Everybody has to help. Things have fallen apart and we have a chance to re-build.

I'm Bouta Bounce

On Friday I'm all done with this program I can't wait for that good food in my belly once again, cant wait to be back at the house for the first time again. Just two more days than I'm finna bounce up outta here.

I hate this jail food it gets good only sometimes when you really hungry tho. And when you on the outs you really aint gotta worry about taking your points.

Just a matter of time for me to be back on them good old streets again. I'ma think about a plan when I get out so I can get off probation. Probably do a lot of community service or something like that. One thing I've always wanted to do is graduate High School. The end.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We wish you luck, and are glad to hear your desire to graduate! Take care of yourself.

People Who Talk

I hate people that talk shhh but they do anything. People make me mad when they talk about me but don't even know me if most of the people that talk shh to me knew me on the outs they wouldn't be talking.

I think most of the people that are locked up talk shh because they know that the fight is going to get broke up by staff. I don't really fight when I'm locked up because the fight is only going to last 1 min at the most.

-Ronald Regan

From The Beat: Words are powerful and can cause destruction. It doesn't sound like a good idea to talk about people inside or out.

Untitled

I'm not going to lie one thing I always wanted to do is..... Go to prison. Growing up to watch'n "Blood N Blood Out" and all the gang movies it fascinated me. I ended up in the life I wanted to do.

Man I think back when I was lil' I don't want to go anymore. But in the future I'm going to end up going. Because I stay doing these crimes catching this time. It don't worry me. I chose this life and I'm willing to play my dues. I don't got any plans on getting out. I'm sixteen doing dirty deeds.

I think about it. Am I sick in the mind for doing what I do? If you were in my shoes when the enemies want start something. When you see me in the streets I aint doing no running.

Many people ask are you going to change when I get out. I keep it real nope why should I? Got die for something. I got a lot of pain running in my veins. It's strange. Maybe one day I will get rid of the pain. To all stay up and do the time.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: We're wondering what you remember when you think back to when you were little...that makes you not want to go to prison anymore. What was your life like when you were little? How did you feel about yourself, and your life and future? You are so persistent, if you chose to try something different with your life you could probably do many things!

Tryna Get It Over Wit

What's up wit' The Beat? Me you know just tryna get this baby time over with so I can get out there and get a legit job help the fam bam and what not but yup to all locked up keep yo head up stay strong do ya'll time and don't let time do you, that's it for now Beat till next time late!

-Toons

From The Beat: What kind of legit job do you want? How are you doing your time, how are you making your time work to your advantage, help you achieve your goals?

Rythym

Your slackin on your mackin
your limpin on your pimpin
whatever you walkin on dry it up
cause you're slippin!

-Lil Skittles

From The Beat: You know we don't know whether to laugh or cry about this rhythm. We know folks have lost a lot slippin'.

Changing

I might be getting out in 7 days. I can't wait to get out. But I don't know if I'm getting out next week. I'll get out next week if I get out 2 weeks early. I've done pretty well in this program and most of the staff here think I should get out early. But I haven't talked to my probation officer so I don't know. So I'm especially trying to do good so I can get out next week.

When I go get out I'm never coming back because I hate it here. And I begin to hate it more and more everyday. But I want out so I don't respond. This aint the place to be. I can't be mad at the staff for giving me directions because it's their job and it's my fault. It's my fault because I committed a crime to be here. So I'm going to be different when I get out because I don't want this type of life.

-Mc

From The Beat: With all due respect we hope to never see you again! Enjoy your life! Live free and prosper.

A Bad Influence

I think I'm a bad influence sometimes. Because one time when my friend was supposed to do a weekend I was about to go to a party up in San Jose. I was showing my homeboy some pictures of these girls that were trying to kick it.

So he didn't go to do the weekend and up doing like six months in New Foundations. I felt hella bad for that and felt like a bad influence. The worst thing about it was we didn't even get to go to the function.

-Young Goof

From The Beat: Ouch. Well it sounds like you were excited, and you shared that with him and he felt it too, and yeah—if you could do it again maybe you'd keep those photos tucked away...It's definitely easier to resist temptations when they're not in your face.

Solano

I only got 17 more days tell I get out and when I get out I'm going to get a job at K.F.C and do better than before and catch up in school grades and hopefully go to college?

And move to like a beach somewhere in Miami and be married and have kids and visit my dad, grandma, grandpa, and the rest of the fam like once every 2 months and I am gonna do all this by being a supervisor on the construction.

-Lil' Homie

From The Beat: We like the beach too, good luck! Go to college!

On My Own Hype

Tell you about me. I personally think Ima bad influence to others but the way I see it is like this if you want to be a loser then be one, or if you want to be a follower then go a head-ya dig? But me I be on my own hype so I aint neither ya dig? That's why you gotta be on yo own hype.

-Mark

From The Beat: It's helpful to be responsible for your own choices, and to recognize that it matters what choices are put in front of people. Being independent is good, and can be balance with letting others help you sometimes.

A Brutal Honest Appraisal

I don't care what people think about me even if what they say is something bad about me because I already know how I am, so I don't care what anybody thinks because I'm still going to be the same way that I am for years to come--so they better just deal with it or just not kick it with G.

-G

From The Beat: It does matter what you think of yourself. Why wouldn't you want to grow and develop as you get older and gain wisdom and experience?

Ace

I think that influences can be can be good or bad things no matter what it is it. It all depends on how you look at things. Whether something is a good influence to most it can be a bad influence on some, it's all a matter of perspective.

You could be a bank robber and the police could be a bad influence on you--same thing with the police and the only real bad influence is the courts they always tryna put a brada in jail.

-Ace

From The Beat: We agree that perspective is incredibly important, and often a choice. You can look at the good, or the bad—and choose to engage with either one. Once in the system you have to work to get out and stay out.

What's Up

Right is never thinking wrong, wrong is never doing right. I liked Blues Clues never thought of doing what I do today. I use to eat ramen now I eat steak. Before wearing shoes that light up, now I wear MJ flights my favorite color used to be brings now it's good. Before it was Phat Farm now it's True Religion and Smash Jeans. It's a big difference of what happens.

-Big Mac

From The Beat: Sometimes to do right, we might think wrong—but we don't act it out. The streets may call, but you don't have to answer...Do you miss the old days? If you look ahead 10 years in your life, where do you want to be then?

Mur

....Skirrrtt, crash, skidd, bam, slam! That's my brain hitting the walls of my head. My imagination is reckless. It likes to wander off, away from the point of things. See away from the point! Grr. I want freedom now! I want her now!

My mother always told me, "want in one hand shh in the other see which one fills up faster." Well if want was a solid then I would have my hands full. Whatever.

In my mind I see things differently than most people, I don't know I can't explain it but you'll see it when the time comes. All this want soon will change. It will change into have. I will always have her. Grr. Stress. Keeping us apart just makes us want more of each other. I'm going crazy in here from love deprivation, so when I get out I'ma need a cure, so help me out.

-Murmur

From The Beat: You're lucky to want something enough to let it help motivate you! Do your program and get out!

Bad Influence

A lot of people are bad influence but me I don't think I'm a bad influence. A lot of people say I am because of what I do, and they think just because I came to juvie I'm a bad influence. But it's all good you feel me I don't listen to what they say.

-What I Think

From The Beat: Do you think people are responsible for their own choices no matter what you do, and therefore you don't really influence them—what they do is their own choice? It's important to know what's good about yourself, as well as what you'd improve...

I'm Lazy

Somehow I always end up defeated. It's a silent joke behind your smile. You won and I hate you.

And if you hadn't defeated me, I would have done it myself. And that would be my goal.

Sometimes reality makes me tense And I forgot there is passion I forgot to relax

Redemption

When I look into some people's eyes I see secrets.

When I look into my own

I only see mischief.

I want knowledge,

But I'm lazy.

-Lizy

From The Beat: Many times what means most to us is not easy to come by, or achieve. Maybe that's part of why it is meaningful to us. Life is deep—as you know.

JJC

Well, I have been here a month now and since I am not feeling the topics today I am going to write about something different. Time has passed by really fast so far thanks to the staff and the girls that are in here. They all make it not so bad to be in here. I don't have a problem with the girls that are in here. But to be honest I would actually rather be at home right now with my mom and my family. They haven't told me how long I will be here but I hope it is not too long. I guess I will see what happens.

-Lady Brown

From The Beat: You are not in the Hall to make friends, you are there to work on yourself, and since you don't know how long you are going to be here, the best thing for you to do is to open up to yourself and get to know who you really are. That is why we give you the topics, so you can tell us what you think and in turn learn something about how you feel and think.

GUNS

The first time I ever seen a gun is when I was playing craps with my homies and some other dude. The other guy won all my money and my homies. So one of them pulled out a gun, and beat him with it 'till he passed out. After he gave my money to me, so I could hide it. I put it in a bag and hid it in a tree.

-Rdd

From The Beat: Wow, playing craps lead to a dangerous situation. Gambling is not good because in most occasions the loser wants their money back no matter what. We would love for you to write about what you were thinking and feeling beyond the report of what happened. What was going through your mind?

GUNS

Man guns are hot I can name all kinds of guns. But, that is not the answer people that use a gun I call them "punk." Because you can just fight, but then if you lost they just want to kill.

-C Man

From The Beat: Fighting nowadays is dangerous. You're right a fight can lead to being seriously injured. We really encourage you to thinking about what fighting solves? Think about what happens when people fight, they hurt each other and stay mad at each other. When this happens all the time in a community...the relationships are broken and there's no unity. Then when there is a problem that requires everyone to come together to solve it...what happens?

Home

When I was a youngster I got locked up, then I prayed for the lord to send me home to my momma for I could be with my family on Christmas. Because they be crying, I pray for that I could go home.

-Ruben

From The Beat: We see you miss your loved ones. It's hard to be away from family during the holidays. Now, that you realize how much you care for them and depend on them, won't you think also about how you can help to give back?

GUNS

I am writing this story because I am going to be moving to commit side for 6 months I can't wait till June so I can be with my family. I think it is wrong to have a gun. I think that it's okay for a cop to have one. If I seen one of my friends smoking or doing drugs I will tell him not to do it because it kills his soul. I can't wait to get out and eat good food.

-Johnny

From The Beat: You're a better friend when you let your friends know when they're doing harm to themselves.

Court

My court's on Monday and I been praying that I can get out. I know I don't belong here, but I know the judge is not going to believe me. Well hope I get out to do better. I want to go home with my family but, I guess well hope the lord here's me praying and help me out.

-Ezeguiel

From The Beat: The best you can do is show up to court and tell the truth. If praying helps you, continue to ask god for help.

Putting Myself In My Mom's Shoes

If I put myself in here shoes for one day, I think that it would be really hard because of all of the things that I have put her through. I just wouldn't know where to start. I guess that the first thing I would do is to put me out so that I would know what it is like to live out on the streets. But I don't think I would because I don't think that nobody could take care of me as good as she does. So as my mom, I would start to do right by her and to get help from my probation officer.

It really hurts me to put myself into my mom's shoes because I feel that I am killing her. I am so sorry mom and I don't want to hurt you anymore.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: We think that it is really mature of you to see yourself from another's eyes, one that cares the world for you. It just takes one step at a time to do better for yourself and the others around you, so what will you do first?

Places

This place is wack, I'm just thinking about when I'm getting out next December. Things are bitter sweet. People act like this is their home. I'm tired of being told when to do things. This part of life is one I lived too long.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: JJC was not designed to be a playground. It's a detention center with many rules and regulation. We hope once you go home, you stay free.

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

Well if someone was to ask my family what they think of me, it probably wouldn't be good. They would probably say that I was selfish and greedy. But at the same time they could say that I am innocent and sweet. I don't know, I kind of have two different sides to me now that I think about it. I can be nice and helpful, and then mean and angry.

-Bradd

From The Beat: There are many sides to everyone, we are not just one quality, but as mixture of many. As you learn and grow we hope that you learn to use your best qualities to represent yourself, and learn to control the bad ones as well.

Guns

When people have guns they are no joke, because you can kill people and people play with guns. They hurt you were you can shoot yourself. My little cousin died over playing with a gun. Because when someone has a gun you can kill yourself. It's not good to have people play with a pistol or have a gun. Because I don't want my kids having guns, because they might do something stupid and have to do time.

-Young

From The Beat: Your right people kill people or themselves with guns. Having or using a gun can lead to serious time, that's why it's better to stay away from guns.

The Value Of My Life

This is the value of my life. It is important because I have a lot of people who love me and care about me. First off, I got a mother, a sister and a brother who loves me.

I also have a one-year old son and a wife who loves me. That's part of the reason why the value of my life is so important. Some people don't think much about their life. Maybe it's because they don't have much to live for, or no cares about them. I have lots of ability to do whatever I want. Violence and killings occur for nothing. It's straight bull. I gotta keep it real.

See that's what wrong with young people. They're scared to tell the truth about their life cause they're worried about what someone else is thinking of them. To me, I don't give a flip. The value of my life is thousand percent. I don't want my son and family to lose D.Boy over something dumb as hell and for no good reason.

-D.Boy

From The Beat: We hear you and admire your focus and priorities. It is important to keep your head up and keep focused. Always work to make sure you don't get sucked into someone else's mistakes. Peace and Luck.

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

Well, if someone were to ask my family what they think of me, it would probably not be good. They would probably say I was selfish and greedy but at the same time, they would say I am innocent and sweet. I don't know. I kind of have two different have two sides to me. I can be so kind and helpful and then...

-Brand

From The Beat: We all have the capability to be really bad or really good. Work towards the light but don't expect to be perfect. We all screw up sometimes and make mistakes. The trick is we have to learn from our mistakes. Peace.

Bad Influence

Bad Influence is when you are guided by to do things that are bad and hurt others. Bad influence is misguiding someone into doing in another for chasing drugs, cars and other things that are not of good value. Bad influence is the devil whispering in your ear telling you to do this, take that, smoke him, trash that. That's a bad influence.

-Perez

From The Beat: Bad influences do drive us to do bad things but at some point we have to admit we take over the reins and we decide against bad choices. At some point we have to own our actions or we'll forever going to blame other people.

I Miss My Real Life

The one that I miss the most is my daughter. She is thirteen months old. She is adorable and smart, and loveable. I miss everything about her. I miss changing her diaper, yelling at her when I get frustrated, listening to her cry, holding her and squeezing her tight too. I miss her so much and I can't wait to go home and to be the mother to my baby.

Every time I am thinking about her sitting in my room, tears come to my eyes. The second person I miss the most is my husband. I miss all of the good ways that we were together, alone and with our daughter. I miss taking care of my home. I can't wait to get out of here.

-Aydah

From The Beat: You say that you miss your family you have created because of what it gives to you. What about what your baby misses and needs? Your baby may not be able to express herself yet, but she needs you to get your act together and stop thinking about yourself

My Life

Hey what's up Beat? I never had a mom in my life but that's okay cause my Grandma took care of me since I was one month old. I regret being here. This is my 4th time and I'm tired of it mainly cause my grandma's been there for me all my life and this is how I am repaying her.

I know for a fact that this is my last time in here. Hopefully I will go home when I go to court. I think my life started messing up cause I was smoking weed and drinking so I'm going to try to stop when I get out and show my grandma that I can stay out and also the judge. Hopefully he will give me another chance in drug court and I know I will graduate from the program with the help and support of my grandma Rachel.

She is my mom, my pride and joy. She mean's the world to me so she's why I'm going to stop messing up and coming to juvenile hall. My friends ain't there for me when I'm locked up or I'm in a bind but my grandma is. She means everything to me and it's about time I start appreciating it before it's too late and I want to say that I wrote this in January 2009.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Our family is always there for us and we often take them for granted but no one cares more about us than our families. Good luck with changing your life but realize getting off drugs and the booze is not a given. Take advantage of support groups like AA and NA.

How It Is

You asked me what I have always wanted to do in life, and I think that what I want is to get off of probation, and to have my life be easier.

Every time I get out of here I forget what it was like to be here and every time I come back in I remember to be grateful for what I had out there. I want to tell all the homies to get their stuff together and grow up already.

-Pebbles

From The Beat: What you want to tell people is easier said than done. We bet that if someone told you that it wouldn't change you either. Life is about learning to be the change that we want to see in others, so what can you do to remember to be grateful before you get out this time around?

Doing Good

Life in my world is a crazy story. I'm not the best with fame and glory. There are many people that have a dangerous side.

I was taught good, and I went on the wrong side. I've been in trouble many times before but again I'm still locked up. I've been influenced to do a lot of bad things but all my mistakes were put aside in the ring.

I also taught many people to do good because out there you can. If you would do good...and that's only if you ain't from the hood.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Was it tough for you to stand up to peer pressure? We can only imagine it must have been, so in that process, what did you do to be a positive influence to others?

Life

In life there's more than just doing the crime you got to think before you do and then relay on your act. Then you never know what's going to happen so if you get out again don't do the crime if you do not want to do the time.

-C-Man

From The Beat: You're right one should always think before acting, and the only way to stay out of JJC is to not do the crime.

I Want To Help My Family.

One thing I've always wanted to do is make enough money to support my family and myself. The reason is because my mom would look at me as a good son instead of a disgrace. I love my family and I want them to live in a house. I live in an apartment and want to upgrade that into a house. Making money to do good is what I've always wanted to do but in a legit way.

-Andy

From The Beat: We hear you and wish you well in help your family. To want to help others and to be able to help others is a wonderful mentality to have. We wish you to find a legitimate way to make money and help your family financially. You can get an education and work to gather as many skills as you can. Money/wealth comes with a good intentions and a good job well done.

I Saw The Value Of My Life

Well, I didn't see my value when I was out. I began to see it when I was in here but it made me see a new path I could take and a fresh start but that's only for my drug problems. It helped me to stop using drugs and to stop being around it. I see now, that doing drugs are not going to help me go anywhere or do anything better with my life.

I only got six months in here but that's better than a year in camp. I know that people say it's easier now than before but it would be harder for my parents to see me there. It's easier for my parents to see me here but anyway, I had to see my life value in here. It changed my thinking about my way of life. Thanks beat for letting me get my word out. Peace.

-Wolf

From The Beat: However it happened, congratulations on seeing your worth and the value you have. No other person's caring and respect will ever matter more than your respect for yourself. Good luck.

I Was A Bad Influence

I remember when I was a bad influence on my friend. I wanted to do something bad and he didn't want to come along. After I told him so many times to come with me, he decided to come along. It turned out to be a bad situation.

Now I really, really want to get my life together and leave all the bad things I did in the past. This is my bad influence story, so please avoid these situations.

-Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you've learned from this experience. When you bring someone else into a bad situation, you not only risk your life but that person's life as well. We're glad to hear you want to put this all behind you. We hope you move on to better things.

I Hate Females

Do you know what is funny about females? They talk a lot of shhh but they do not go through with what they say they are going to do. This one female says that she wants to throw blows at me and that she wants not her girl to come help her.

But she hasn't and I don't think she is really going to do anything, because you know what? I think that she is scared herself. She just wants to run her mouth. Me being in here really just shows how much I hate females and I want to be out.

- Frustrated

From The Beat: Everyone in the Hall is scared of something, and we think that it takes a bigger person to step back from a situation and say that since you are wise enough to realize this, then maybe you should give people the room to heal, and tell them that it is okay that they are scared, because you are too. When we push others away, it's because we need them the most.

My Lifestyle

First of all, I want to write about my life in gangs in the past and how to better myself for my child that I am expecting. One thing I want to say is gangs ain't going to get you nowhere. You don't want to get your loved ones hurt. Another important thing in my life apart from leaving the gangs behind is that I have dedicated my life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This will better myself and the life of my kid in the future and my soon to be wife. Before I got into juvenile hall I was suppose to get married on Valentine's Day but the gang life messed that up for me. And another thing was that the people I used to kick it with got one of my best friends killed. All I want to say is if you are a gang member get out while you can.

-Joshua

From The Beat: We admire you desire to change your life. Do not follow the herd. Lead your own path and follow your heart. We realize how hard this is and the courage this requires. We wish you luck, peace and strength. Godspeed.

My Thoughts

Sometimes I do not know why I do the things that I do. Maybe it is because I need the attention, or maybe I just need to feel loved. My real Mom is on the streets, and on drugs. My Dad is locked up in prison. So then who am I supposed to turn to when I feel like no one loves me? When I get out of this place I just want to do what is right, I want to finish school and graduate so I can go and be somebody.

-Sharvel

From The Beat: Sharvel you are somebody. It is hard when those we need the most can't be there for us, but as you grow we hope that you learn that you can count on yourself and if you can learn to give yourself love and acceptance, others will follow.

Females Are Fake

I think that you all need to get out of here already. Everyone in here is all so fake and they get on my nerves. They all try to act so hard and to put up a front but they ain't nothing on the outside. It makes me mad that girls try to gang bang but when they are by themselves they don't do anything. I just want to get out of here and to catch them all slipping.

-Tice

From The Beat: Being in the Hall is hard for everyone, and just like you they are trying to cope with feeling scared and alone. The best thing that you can do is to stop worrying about what others think and do. You need to focus on yourself and be the bigger person by letting others know that you are above the influence of hate and anger.

Good Bad Influences

I've kicked it with so called "bad influences." To me they were everything but that. My definition of a bad influence is someone who encourages someone else to do bad things. For me they don't encourage me to do bad but most of the time it is good.

They are the type that if I ask how to get a job, they would tell me how or if I want to flip bricks, they would show me how to do that to. If I ask them how to do wrong they always tell me that there are better ways. The bottom line is you let people influence you good or bad.

-Kid

From The Beat: We agree with you. People give advice and do what they are going to do but we decide if we are going to follow them or if we are going to use our minds and make our own decisions. Many people say they are leaders but few of them are brave enough to follow their own thoughts.

Homies

I never had a homie that let me down, because I treat my homies how I want to be treated. I treat people with respect because you should show respect to people, because when some one shows respect that's how you should treat them back.

-Gregory

From The Beat: Respect is an important word out here. Being respectful will take you a long way.

Moving Forward, Falling Back

One thing I've always wanted to do is stay off probation. I tried and it's hard. I keep moving forward, I fall back down ten times harder. Then, something I say is "I'm never going to get locked up." Then I fall back down and don't know what to do. I go crazy in my room. I've been here so long all the staff know me.

One thing I'm going to do is to try and change so I won't have to come back. For now, I'm going to do my time and get out. Do what I've always wanted to do and enjoy my life.

-Ceedo

From The Beat: That feeling of trying to move forward but only falling backward makes complete sense. It is normal and we hope you don't feel alone. Would it help to only focus on the things that will help you move forward in life, for example, going to school or getting a job? What are the things that make you fall backward?

Lost

What's up Beat! Another day in JJC. I'm running in my mind with my mask on and I'm thinking about some ninjas and I'm ready. As I'm sitting in my cell I got both sides of my soul saying screw it up. And I'm chilling with my ninja, and it's those nasty savage ways that we roll with. I got my finger on the trigger, and I feel hella high, and I feel hella lost and I don't know why??? So my soul tells me, screw it, let's go to the other side, and I bust one in my head so I go to other side.

-Andy

From The Beat: The intensity of your words reflects the intensity of what you're feeling. It's a crazy feeling to feel so hyped up and angry and savage, but at the same time, to feel so lost and alone. We're here for you, and we hope you know you're not alone.

What I Am Looking At

I am locked up because of possession of stolen property and I now only have a felony. The judge suggested either I get released to my family or I go to a group home or I can go to boot camp for a year or I could go to the commit side for a maximum of 3 years and forty days or I can get community service. I think they might reassess me because I have less charges than others and mine is very smaller than everybody else's so that is all I have to say.

-Rube

From The Beat: You have many situations coming up that are out of your control. We would be working on meditating and praying to center ourselves. The last thing we want to do is climb the walls.

Disneyland

One thing I've always wanted to do is go to Disneyland because I have never been there. I think it would be fun to go because there are many rides to go on. My older sister has been there three times and she says it's really fun.

-Valden

From The Beat: Disneyland is an exciting place where you can feel like a kid again. Maybe when you get out, you should ask your sister to take you.

One Time

One time when my homies and I were drunk, we had a shotgun and I brainwashed them to go jack a liquor store. So eventually after telling them so much, we did and came up on about five hundred dollars. That was the one time I was a bad influence, but at least we didn't get caught.

-Pepe

From The Beat: You're lucky you didn't get caught, or hurt. It's extremely risky and dangerous to put yourself and others in this situation. The outcome could have been horrific, and you might not be here today.

Mexico

One thing I've always wanted to do is to go to Mexico. I want to meet all sorts of Mexican hotties. I also want to go eat real Mexican tacos and tortas and burritos. I heard there is all kind of broads in Mexico walking around in bathing suits.

-Vacation

From The Beat: It's good to dream because it makes us want to take action. We want to work towards accomplishing our dreams and we do accomplish it one goal at a time. We hope you get to Mexico one day.

Re-adoption

What's up Beat? It's evil being back in this hall. I just wanted to let you know that I'm back in the hall again but for good reasons because I am getting adopted back to my bio-mom.

-Adopted

From The Beat: That's wonderful news. We hope and wish you the best with your mother. Good luck.

A True Friend

A true Friend and family member would tell you everything you are doing wrong and what you need to do that's right. I would love if my friends would tell me exactly what they think about because I would know what to do and what not to do. If I told my friends how I felt about them I would feel a lot better. I think they would also feel better. They can learn from their mistakes.

-Cali's Most Wanted

From The Beat: We admire your courage and desire for the honest truth. We strive to maintain the level you have stated.

My Beats

Fear for my life
Run from the gun
Every time I turn around
I gotta use one
Watching for the cops
While I'm on the run
Now I'm locked down
Can't see the sun
Once I get out
It's back to the fun
Won't learn my lesson
Til the day comes
I bail through the hood
Get cuffed in the grass
As they say, a hard head
Makes for a soft a**.

-Lucky Charms

From The Beat: Well written! Nice flow, catchy words, strong message. Keep writing—you've got lot of talent and expression waiting to burst, so share it with the world!

No Good Doing What I Want

One thing I've always wanted to do as a little kid was basically do what I want to do. And now that I can do what I want to do, I regret it because before I couldn't do whatever and my dad was always there to keep me in check. Then he got locked up and it all came down hard. I started gang banging, doing drugs and other illegal activity that led to me getting locked up and going to boot camp. I regret wishing to do whatever I wanted. But now

I have been through it so many times that I won't come back because if I do get into trouble I am going to county. But I ain't going to go down like that. I am going to change and be someone in life and prove it to all those people who said I wasn't going to be anyone, like the staff at the camp and at the hall. Not only that but for my mom and myself.

And the last thing I want to say is I love my mom and dad. Only God can judge me now.

-Nino

From The Beat: It can be liberating to have the freedom to do as we please, but with that sense of liberation and freedom also come a huge responsibility to make sure we don't abuse it. Instead of having someone there to keep you in check, what are some ways you can keep yourself in check?

The Value of One Life

It's messed up for a person to get on BART, not knowing he's about to get killed. Especially he was free and he was just living his life when they decided to kill him. Goes to show there is still racism out there especially against African Americans. Now that Obama's pres, hopefully that will change.

-BayBoy

From The Beat: It is messed up about what happened at BART but there is hope with the election of President Obama. We must always remember we are the ones dealing with racism everyday. We can change it.

Giving It Up

I have to give up my gang banging life, the minute I get out of here. Because I don't want me and my family to get shot at, that's what happened to my cousin.

-John

From The Beat: Change is not easy, but it's possible. Stay focused and look into joining clubs or picking up new hobbies.

Where I'm From

I was raised in Fresno, what many people know as the "ghetto".

I did not used to gang bang. I thought it was dumb and I remember saying I would never bang. But a few years ago, I was sent to boot camp and was kickin it with some homies whom I knew ever since I was a little kid. They were all in a gang. When other gangs saw me with them, they would try to disrespect me, but that wouldn't get to me because I was not a gang member.

I was doing a year, and during that year, the homies showed me love so I started riding with them. Ever since I got jumped, my life changed a lot. I was shot at one time because of my gang, and after that day, all I could think about was gang banging because I could have been dead already.

To all doing time, keep your head high.

-Criminal

From The Beat: Looking back, do you still think gang banging is dumb? Has it gotten you where you'd like to be in life? Did you choose that route because you felt it was your only choice? Do you think your life would be different had you reached out to an adult mentor or teacher for help, instead of a gang? We know that you experienced something significant, even traumatic, with your gang. However, does it justify you supporting and perpetuating violence?

Lovesick Suicide

The night is dark and still
as I walk the silent lonely streets
I shiver as the frosty wind blows past
My mind dark and desolate
clouded with lovelorn memories of my woe
As I reminisce these languishing thoughts
I continue my stroll of pending damnation
With no destination I walk the abyss before me
I pray to Asmodeus to lead my
path and mark my soul
to guide me to freedom and
clear my mind
to deliver me to my final curtain
fall in peace
As night turns to dusk
My stroll shall soon come to
an end
as the street narrows
soon my life will soon share
the same demise
At last my stride come to a halt
I am hesitant as I marvel at
the large iron gate before me
For on the other side lies my lover
She steps silently and peacefully
as she does every night
I thank Belial for all he's given me
I pray my slaying be haste
and pain free
Staring down at her I am silent
I lay a dozen of the whitest
roses upon her
For these are her favorite
I lay two black ones above her
to mourn the two souls that
will lie here tonight
I fall to my knees and kiss the
stone above her head
and with my last words I utter
"Forgive my dearest wife"
I raise my blade and take my life.
Je t'aime Desire

-Jake

From The Beat: This is a passionate poem that reminds us of "Romeo and Juliet." Thank you for sharing it.

I'm Not A Bad Person

I'm writing about bad influence today because some square ass people think that because I got a record, they give me dirty looks like I am going to rob them or something. Even schoolteachers and principals be hating but it's cool, because they tripping and hating on a player. Ya dig? Even my own flesh and blood don't talk to me because of the choices I made and it hurts me inside.

All I know is that I don't gang bang. I don't kill people or rob people either and yet here all this trash talk saying I'm never gonna do good in my life. But wait until they see me in my legit ride and legit job. What will they say then huh? I'm gonna prove everyone on the outs that I can do something with my life. That's all I got. 'Till next Friday. Peace.

-Get To Know Me

From The Beat: Even though we know who we are, others may not see it. We know that part of you wants to show others that you are not who they think you are. But, we also encourage you to NOT let negative attitudes from other people influence you too much. In the end, you have to believe in yourself.

Control

Your life goes to one side or another. One side is good, one side is bad. You will always see or meet people who try to bring you down. You will also meet people who are good influences. Who you hang out with will determine your attitude and also your behavior. It doesn't matter who you hang out with if you can control your attitude, and if you can control yourself.

-Joshua

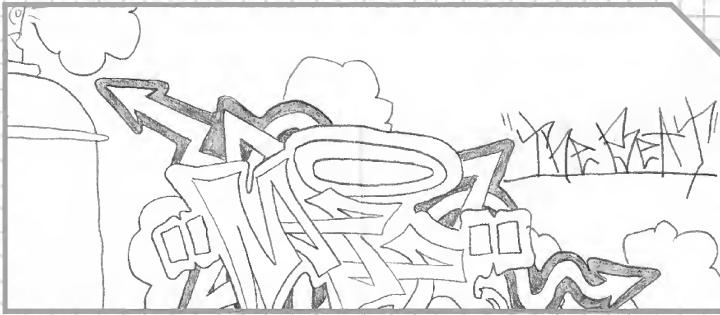
From The Beat: These are some very wise words, Joshua. Thank you for sharing it with us. We are very impressed and proud that you have identified where you can become a stronger person. We hope readers will heed your wisdom as they go through the ups and downs of life.

Going East

One thing I've always wanted to do is travel to the East Coast to like Atlanta or something. I just want to see what it is like outside of the West Coast. I might get to when I get out.

-Derrick

From The Beat: There are so many beautiful places to see and visit on the East Coast. We hope you get there someday!



Reflections

One thing I've always wanted to do is not steal from the store because I know in the end I'll end up where I'm at today. Now I think my time is not worth doing a year at boot camp. Guess not because I just came from there and was sent to JJC with two brand new charges but I think it was worth doing more time.

I think this will be my last charge being here. Maybe? I thought that my mind was working like a soldier, doing what I got to get my respect from where I live. But now that I got all my respect, it's hard to think that it is going to be my last charge. To everyone, keep your head up, all day, everyday.

-Francisco

From The Beat: You've earned our respect, Francisco, and we wish you only good things once you get out. You don't have to steal to get what you need. You're better and smarter than that. Please know there are many willing adults, mentors and teachers out there willing to help you.

Bad Influences

There was a time when my friend's mom would call me a bad influence on her son. It was when I used to steal a lot, and I would convince him to go with me and he would go most of the time but he would never go into the store with me. I always did it by myself but his mom would call me a bad influence and it always made me feel bad.

-Zack

From The Beat: We're sorry she called you those names but you seem to do all the things she said you would. Still, you didn't seem to make your friend do anything.

My Fault

I am a bad influence to all my friends because I would make them do everything I would do. I used to tell them all kinds of stuff. If they wouldn't want to do it, I would get mad and then they would do it.

One time one of my new friends came to my pad and I had hella brew and bud. Some girls were going to come to my house too, but he didn't want to do anything cause he had never done anything like that before. Then when the girls came, I told him to drink and smoke. At the end of the night, he was all buzzed out. After that night, he became addicted to drinking, smoking and poppin' thizz. After a month he got in trouble for doing something stupid when he was buzzed out. So I feel like it's my fault for teaching him those bad things.

-Mario

From The Beat: Looking back, of course, you shouldn't have pressured him to do something he didn't want to do. Why do you pressure others to do things they don't want to? Is it to make you feel better? Is it because you don't want to be the only one who has screwed up? If you fall, do you want others to fall too? It's a serious question to think about, and maybe there is no straight answer, but at least you're starting to acknowledge the negative impact you've had on others.

Be A Cowboy

One thing I have always wanted was to play for the Dallas Cowboys and to be their best running back. I would like to be with their cheerleaders and take pictures with them. I would like the fame and fortune.

-Emmitt Smith

From The Beat: Yeah, dreams are important. We need to imagine what we could be and how nice it will be and then we need to work hard to achieve it. We don't always achieve our goals but we do some of the times and those are glorious times.

JJC

The first time I got locked up, I told myself that I wasn't coming back. But, when I turned 14 I came back and this time I really mean it. That I'm not going to hurt my family no more.

-Eric

From The Beat: Setting goals for yourself will help you stay out. Stay positive and motivated to change.

To Be A Millionaire

One thing I've always wanted to do is become a millionaire. But then again everyone would want that. I don't know if I will ever be a millionaire but I know what I have to do to get there. It would be tight to be a millionaire but I wouldn't want it to change how I act toward other people. If I did become a millionaire I would probably start to look down on people because they aren't doing as well as me.

-Steven

From The Beat: Most people share this fantasy of becoming a millionaire; just think about what you could do with all that money! It's true, some rich people can be snobs, but there are some rich people who do have generous hearts. What would you do if you had a million dollars? How would you spend it? How would it change the way others treat you?

Flying

The thing I've always wanted to do is to parachute out of an airplane because I love the rush of adrenaline and the wind on my face. I just hope I don't break my legs on the landing.

-Devor

From The Beat: Sounds exhilarating! We hope you get the chance to do this someday.

El Amor

El amor aveces te lleva a muchas cosas. Un día mi hijo no tenía pañales y me sentía mal porque no tenía dinero. Me fui a la calle a vender droga para los pañales y me arraron.

Estoy en la juvenile sufriendo y todavía no sé cuando me dan las 48 horas para que migración venga por mi.

Imaginensen por lo que es capaz un padre por un hijo asi como y nuestro Señor Jesus Cristo quien es nuestro padre, murió por nosotros. Entonces cambiemos para somos nuestros hijos. Cuidate. Dios te ama.

From The Beat: Todos tenemos necesidades en la vida, pero eso no nos da el derecho de hacer lo incorrecto para obtener lo que necesitamos. Esperamos que esta experiencia te deje ver lo que realmente es importante en la vida. Las cosas se ganan de buenas maneras, de manera que no lastimen a nadie.

Love

Sometimes love carries you to many things. One day my son didn't have diapers, and I felt bad because I didn't have any money. I went out to the streets to sell drugs for the diapers and I got arrested.

I am in juvenile hall suffering and I don't know when I am going to get the 48 hours so immigration can come for me.

Just imagine what a father is capable of doing for a son, just like our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our father, died for us. So, lets change for our kids. Take care. God loves you.

-Kelin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We all have needs in life, but that doesn't mean that we are going to go out and do what's wrong to get what we need. We hope your experience make you see what's more important in life. Things we need should be gained the correct way, not the way that can harm others.

Escuchando Usted Mismo

Una ves que me junto con unos compañeros de trabajo tube un problema por que al paracer eran pandilleros des pues de eso nunca volvi a juntar me con ellos y a ora piensan que yo tambien lo soy uno de ellos. Ellos estan enojados y cada vez que me ben quieren que me junte con ellos pero yo no les hago caso porque yo trabajo y ellos en las calles.

From The Beat: Parece que tiene un montón de cosas positivas que estan pasando afuera. Usted tiene un trabajo y sabes que usted no desea estar conectado a la gente en las bandas. Es cierto que a veces saliendo con personas demasiado puede hacer que la gente creen que está conectado a ellos. Con suerte, usted puede permanecer fuera de esas situaciones, seguir trabajando y encontrar a las personas que puedan ayudarte.

Listening To Yourself

One time, I met up with some friends from work and I had a problem, because they looked like they were in a gang and after that I did not want to be near them or people would think that I was in the gang with them. They are angry and every time they see me they want me to join them, but I do not listen to them because I work and they are in the streets.

-Miguel, Fresno

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of positive things happening outside. You have a job and know that you don't want to be connected to people in gangs. It is true that sometimes hanging out with people too much can make people think you are connected to them. Hopefully, you can stay out of those situations, keep working and find people to hang out with who can help you.

La Vida Aquí

Les voy a contar mi vida aqui encerrado. Les puedo decir que a nadie le deseó ni a mi peor enemigo ni tampoco deseó que este encerrado porque la vida aqui encerrado no es nada.

También les voy a contar que estoy encerrado aqui en la juvenile por ser un desgraciado. Ya me arrepenti por andar en las calles chingando.

Le pido a Dios todo poderoso que un día me deje salir porque voy a estar un buen tiempo aqui en la juvenile.

Dios los bendiga y nos proteja en este lugar.

From The Beat: Esperamos que más de algunos aprendan de tu experiencia. ¿Cambia tu forma de pensar después de esta experiencia?

Life In here

I am going to share about my life in here. I want to say to you that I don't wish being locked up to anyone because life in here isn't worth it.

I am going to share that I am locked up in juvenile hall for being a disgrace. I am regretful for being on the streets messing up.

I ask Almighty God to let me out some day because I am going to be in juvenile hall for a long time.

God bless you and protect us in this place.

-Carlos, Marin

From The Beat: We hope some of you learn from your experience. Does your way of viewing things change after this experience?

Voy A Hacer Lo Mejor

Que ondas! Un saludo a la raza Catracha. Me encuentro aqui en la juvenile triste, pero le pido a Dios que me de fuerzas para seguir adelante. Tengo que estar veinte días más para que me manden a migración.

Cuando regrese a este pais, voy a hacer lo mejor de mí para hacer un cambio en mi vida. Voy a ir a la escuela, buscar trabajo y sé que lo voy a encontrar.

Con la ayuda de Dios todo se puede. Es lo único que les puedo decir.

La verdad es que ya se me acabó el tiempo.

No se pongan triste porque estos tiempos pasan. Cuando estes en estos tiempos, lee Salmo: 91 para que Dios te ayude y encontraras paz en tu corazón.

From The Beat: Todo es posible con Dios. Nos gusta eso. Realmente estas pensando de la manera como debiste haber pensado antes de haberte metido en esto. Pero nunca es tarde para reflexionar en nuestros errores y hacer lo correcto. Gracias por el mensaje de la Palabra de Dios.

I am Going To Do My Best

What's up! My greetings to all my Catracho people! I am sad in juvenile hall, but I hope God give me the strength to move on in life. I have to be here for another 20 more days to go to immigration.

When I come back to this country, I am going to do the best of me to make a change in my life. I am going to go to school, look for a job. I know I'm going to find one.

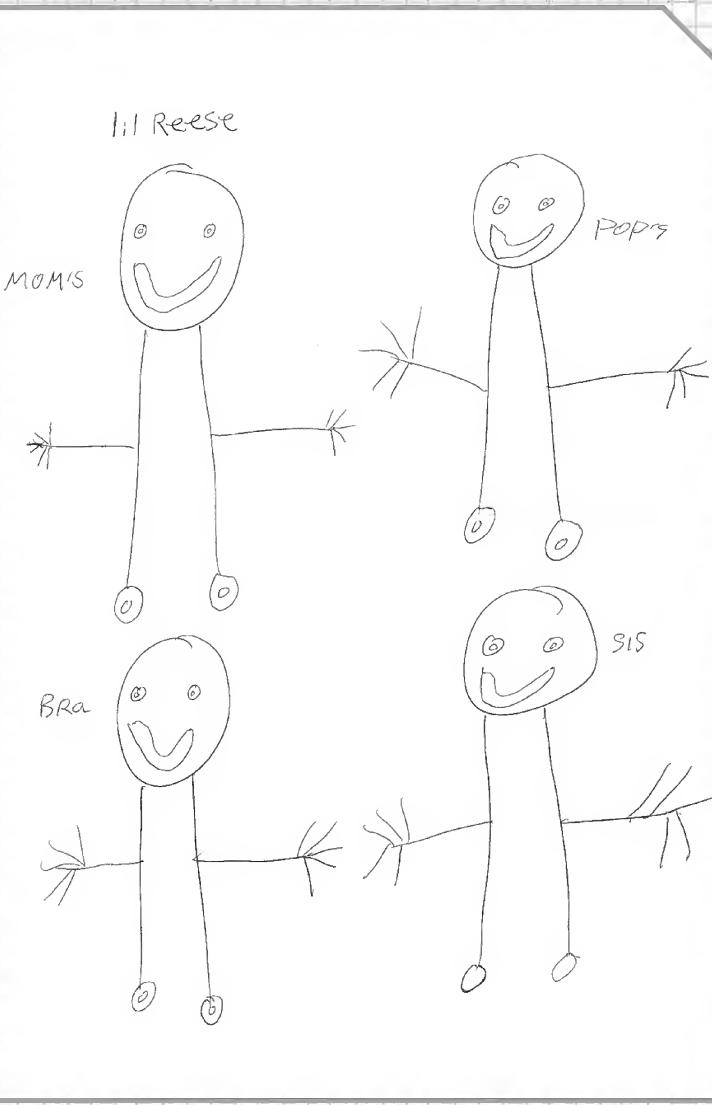
With the help of God everything is possible. He is the only one.

The truth is that time is running out.

Don't get sad, because those times get to an end. When you go through these times, read Salmo: 91, so God can help you find peace in your heart.

-Chele, San Francisco

From The Beat: Everything is possible with God. We like that. You are thinking the proper way you should have thought because getting into this mess. It's never too late to reflect on our mistakes and do right. Thank you for the message of God's word.



No Vida Adentro

Yo cuando salga quiero salirme de todos los problemas que ahorita tengo no puedo a segurar que me salga de mi barrio pero una cosa si a seguro que ya no buelvo a la juvenile por que la ne ta que no ay nada de bida aqui adentro la bida esta alla afuera con tu familia y tu marra y mas si ya tienes un morrito como yo.

From The Beat: Su libertad para vivir como te gusta es una de las más preciosas cosas que usted tiene, sabiendo que usted no quiere vivir en la JJC y que afuera tiene mucho más que ofrecer le ayudará a tomar mejores decisiones en el futuro. Buena suerte con tu familia y debes saber que es importante para usted que estar allí para ellos.

No Life Inside

When I get out, I want to remove myself from the problems that I have right now. I may not be able to get out of my neighborhood but one thing that I am sure I can do is not come back to the JJC because there is no life inside, the life is out there, outside with your family, your girl and if you have one like me, your baby.

Edgar, Fresno

From The Beat: Your freedom to live as you like is one of the most precious things that you have, knowing that you don't want to live in JJC and that outside has much more to offer will help you make better decisions in the future. Good luck with your family and know that it is important for you to be there for them.

Por Andar En Cosas Malas

Uno en las calles hay que peliar. Ahora estoy en la prisión, perdi a mi novia por andar en las gangas, estoy perdiendo la confianza de mi papa, ya sólo estamos él y yo en Estados Unidos.

Mi papá le pego una enfermedad y que cada domingo que viene a verme, lo veo más acabado.

Si mis amigos, mi familia, y mi novia me dijeran lo que piensan, no me ofendería porque me están diciendo la verdad. Y como dicen, "la verda duele," pero es mejor la verdad que una mentira.

Yo sé que no es tarde para cambiar. Cuando salga voy a ponerme las pilas y no voy a ver si la puedo hacer.

Un consejo a todos los homies que apenas están empezando: no sean tontos como yo de perder a sus seres queridos. A mí me dieron unos meses, pero si caigo por otra cosa ya que voy para county porque ya tengo 18 años e iría por 9 años y unos meses.

Bueno, aquí les pongo mi ejemplo para que ustedes reflejen en mí. Si todos usted quieren caer donde yo he caído y perder todo entonces adelante.

From The Beat: Claro que no es tarde para comenzar un nuevo comienzo. Es mas creemos que es el momento adecuado para hacerlo y tartar de recuperar todo lo que has perdido. Ahora tienes a tu padre enfermo y el necesita de tu atención y dedicación. El es la única persona que tiene aquí. El está solo y enfermo. Piensa en el con el corazón y como hijo. Haz el cambio por las personas que realmente necesita de ti.

For Being In Bad Things

You have to fight in the streets. Now I am in prison, I lost my girl for being in gangs, and I am losing my dad's trust given the fact that he and I are only members in the US.

My dad got sick and every time he comes to see me, I see him worse.

If my friends my family and girl tells told me what they think of me, I wouldn't get offended because they are just telling me the truth. Like the saying goes, "truth hurts" but it's better to know the truth than being in denial.

I know it's not too late to change. When I get out, I'm not going to try to do the best; I am going to do my best.

I advise all he homies who are beginners not to be stupid like I did when I lost my loved ones. They gave me a few months, but if I come again, I am going to county because I am 18 years old, and they would send me for 9 years and a few more months.

Well, here my example so you can reflect from my experience. If you want to end up where I am and lose everything, go ahead.

-Chino, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Of course it's not too late to start a new life. We believe that it is the proper time for you to start getting back what yours and what you've lost. Now you have your father who is sick and needs your attention, your support and dedications. You're the only person he has over here. He's alone and sick. Think of him with your heart and like a son. Make the change to those who really need you.

The Beat
Within

En Dios

Hola como estan? Espero que esten bien todos. Aqui me siento un poco mal porque nunca he estado en este lugar.

Este 19 de Febrero tengo mi corte y espero que yo gane mi 707. Primeramente Dios confío que El lo puede todo. Espero que todos los que estan en la prisión no se desesperen y confíen en Dios.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tus palabras den fuerza y ánimos a todos. Esperamos que tengas suerte y aprende de tus errores. ¡Suerte!

In God

How are you? I hope you to be well. I feel a little bit bad because I've never been in this place.

This February 19th, I have court and I hope to win my 707. Hopefully God help me knowing He can do it all. I hope you get out of jail, don't get desperate and have faith in God.

-Snoops, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope your words give you strength and motivation to all. We hope you good luck and learn from your mistakes. Good luck!

Malas Influencias

Que ondas carnales. Pues aqui me tienes escribiendoles unas firmes letras. Este vato ha tenido malas influencias.

Me acuerdo cuando era más joven e iba a middle school. Conoci a unos homies y commence a kickiarla. Pasaron los años y commence a meterme en problemas. Cuando me di cuenta, yo estaba en las calles, peliandome, y metiendo en problemas con la jura.

From The Beat: Entonces te distes cuenta de lo que son las malas influencias. Deberías mantenerte alejados de eso que te meten en problemas y buscarte gentes que te guien por un buen, seguro y decente camino.

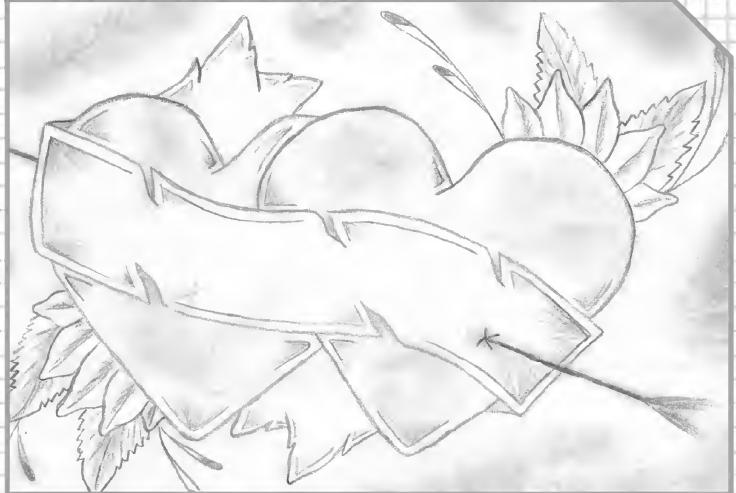
Bad Influence

What's up brothers? Here I am writing some lines. This guy has bad influence.

I remember when I was very young and I was in middle school. I met some friends and I started to kick it with them. Years passed and I started getting into trouble. When I least expected, I was in the streets, fighting, and getting into trouble with the police.

-Pascual, Santa Clara

From The Beat: So now you know who are the bad influences in your life. You need to stay away from those who get you into trouble and meet people who can take you to a nice, safe and decent ride.



Cuidensen

Trucha pongansen las pilas. Cuando anden con otras personas, no se dejen llebar por otras cosas. Pongansen trucha cuando anden tomando o anden haciendo otras cosas porque nomas los meten en puros problemas.

Les digo a todas las morritas que le gusta el desmadre que se pongan las pilas porque sino tambien pagan las cosas de los otros.

From The Beat: Tú también busca la forma como cuidarte mucho también. Esperamos que escuchen tu consejo y lo pongan en marcha. ¿Y tú como piensas cuidarte?

Take Care

Be careful and be active. When you hang around other people, don't let yourself be misguided from other things. Be careful when you drink or do other things because they just get you into trouble.

And I'm saying this to the little girls who like to mess around to wake up or else they'll pay over other's mistakes.

-Paco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You too find a way to take care of yourself. We hope they get your message and put it in work. How do you plan to take care of yourself?

La Economía

La economía esta basada en abrir más locales para negocios, locales de aprendisaje, de trabajos—tayeres de mecánica, carpintería, pintura. Algo así para nuestra juventud de hoy que ha dejado de estudiar.

Necesitan aprender un oficio y empeñarse a hacer algo en la vida y no andar en malas cosas como las pandillas o en drogas.

From The Beat: Buenas ideas! ¿Y tú tienes planes para aprender algún oficio o hacer algo en la vida?

Economy

The economy should be based in creating new business, school programs, and jobs such as mechanic, carpenter, and painting or something like that for the new youth who have quit school. They need to learn a career, encourage themselves to become someone in life and stop doing bad and not get into bad things like gangs or drugs.

-Avila, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good ideas! Do you have plans to achieve a career? Tell us.

My Life

The streets is in my veins,
Ninja so is the game
Getting' rich is my main priority
That's why money is my aim
Money is like my damn heart
Without it I'm dead
So if a ninja think he can take it
Then, ninja, go head
Six feet deep is where the real thugs at
It's where the real thugs lay
So if you claim you wanna be a real thug
That's all you gotta say
It's easy to kill a ninja
But do you got the heart?
At around the age 10
Is when my shhh first started
10 years old, thinking I was sick
Thinkin' I was a thug
But that's only 'cause the big homies on the block
Showed a ninja love
Age 11 through 12
Started skippin' school, being bad
Told my momma I did go
I was late
That lyin' shhh made her mad
Age 13, I started rockin' out
Just didn't give a buck
Also, that's the age I was
When I smoked my first

blunt

Also, that's when robbery got in my system
I wasn't trying to hear
What nobody had to say
'Cause a young ninja didn't wanna listen
It was all fun and games
Until the day I got caught
But now I was used to the halls
So I really didn't stop
Age 14, I'm in a group home now
For the very first time
Getting the hell outta here
Being on the run was the only thing on my mind
Age 15, I just ain't robbin' ninjas
I'm sliding through cribs
You a cutthroat ass ninja if you done did the shhh I did
16 on the run again
8 months now
Got booked for conspiracy with an armed robbery
Now how that sound?
In my life I done sold rocks
And busted many shots
I done smoked weed and popped pills
Then slid through ninja's blocks
I was taught no love
So I just show envy
17 years old, sentenced to two years
Hope y'all ninjas still remember me.

We welcome back Quez who use to write for us back when he was locked up in one of the units of San Francisco's Juvenile Justice Center. From there he was sentenced to Glen Mills Schools, in Concordville, Pennsylvania where he's currently taking photography classes. Quez has come along way from the youngsta he use to be. As he was doing a lot of negative things, but now wants to change, and see his life go in a more positive direction. Quez dazzles us with some heart-felt writing as he talks about everything from his Grandma passing away, to his neighborhood, to the love of his life. Showing us what he's learned on his journey from being a boy to a grown man, we're proud to have Quez in the pages of our publication.

Grandma I Miss You

Dear Grandma,

Hey, Grandma, what's up? I hope you doin' good up there. Well, down here I'm doin'... well, you can say I'm doin' better. I haven't done the things I used to (robberies, shootings, smoking, etc.) in over 15 months.

I know when you left, you said your only wish was for me to stay in school! Well, I got my GED now. I'm soon to be enrolled in college. At first I said, "forget school." I'm gonna do me, but I always had you in my head. So when I came to Glen Mills Schools, you was the only thing on my mind.

When you left, I lost it. Everything went wrong. Everything you wanted me to do didn't happen. Everything I did was the opposite. One promise I kept was, I took care of my momma, brother, and sister.

It hurts my feelings not being able to be with you right now, but when my time comes, I'll see you there. Well, words are getting short, Grandma. I got to go. I love you. RIP Grandma

Eight Letters, Three Words, One Meaning

I got eight letters for you, baby
But it all falls under one meaning
The three words I gotta say to you
Will let you know I'm done cheating
I'm sorry for hurting you, baby
And putting you through pain
I just want you to forgive me
Because I would have done the same
I'm not 100 percent good
I've made mistakes in life
I'm tryin' to stop this boyfriend/girlfriend shhh
And make you my wife
Eight letters, Three words, One meaning
I love you.

Is It Because Of Fillmore?

Sometimes I wonder is it because of where I'm from. Being born and raised in Westside Projects (in the Fillmore District of San Francisco), I was forced to get it how I can. My mom didn't have a job and my grandma passed. So I had to provide for my family somehow, and because of that, I was introduced to crack.

I had to sell rocks to eat, because I didn't want to ask my mom for anything. My dad was never there for me, so I was always the man of the house. Since I was from Westside Projects, I had to put on for my homies and not let anyone disrespect my block. I've been shot at over Fillmore, but I still rep my 'hood no matter what.

But I noticed something while here at Glen Mills. It's not 'bout yo' hood. It's 'bout yo' state, really. Pennsylvania, Texas, and Ohio ninjas don't know what Fillmore is. I would have never been in this predicament if it wasn't for Fillmore.

For The Ladies

If I was sentenced to life
Would you still ride for me?
If I was shot and paralyzed
Would you cry for me?
I know I'm doing wrong
And you don't want me to do it
But it's too late now, the game started
And I ain't halfway through it
I was born in this shhh, baby
So I can't get out
Basically, I did everything on my own
If you know what that's about
I don't regret shhh
'Cause everything happens for a reason
Money, power, and respect
The type of shhh I believe in
Most ninjas say they love you
But that shhh be fake
I'm gonna give you the world
I'll prove it to you
I'm gonna do whatever it take
Watch, one day you'll see
That I tell no lies
But until then I'm gonna love you
And stay by your side.

Paranoia

(Part 1)

Prologue

Brian Caine laid silently in his chair behind the desk of his home office. The blood, which once flooded out of the corners of his mouth, had now dried on both of his cheeks. His icy blue eyes stared mindlessly off in the front of him resting on nothing in particular. His hands and the rest of his body for that were cold and dead, showing no signs of movement whatsoever. Brian Caine is dead. Any idiot could have noticed this at first glance. The blood, his stare, the gun his teeth bit down on, protruding from his mouth like a big steel pacifier.

If he was alive he might speak of the man in the black raincoat smoking his cigarette, gun in hand. He might speak of how he knew this man both past and present, perhaps even future. He might speak of why this man was always on his mind, and always in his dreams. He might even speak this man's name. He would, of course, say why the man wanted him dead. Why wouldn't he? It is the most important part of the case, isn't it? Behind the death of this simple, ordinary therapist lies a complex puzzle very similar to the human mind,

This is a tale of just how fragile the mind really is. This is a tale of a man who is on the brink of insanity. This is the tale of the dearly departed Brian Caine, and his slide into utter paranoia.

1: The Session

"Is this your first time in therapy Mrs. Landry?"

"Ms. Landry, and no, it isn't."

"But this is your first time in one of my therapy sessions, so let me explain to you how it works."

The man known as Brian Caine, known to his client as Henry Worthington, grabbed a rag from his back pocket and blindfolded the woman.

"The blindfold I wrapped around your eyes now is a sign of trust between the two of us. Everything that you tell me today Ms. Landry is completely confidential. I tell this information to no one. It is kept written in a log for my personal records only."

Brian walked around the tiny room just a little bigger than a walk in closet until he came to a desk. He pulled open a drawer and removed from it a green notebook and a Sharpie. He labeled it 'Stella Landry' and opened it to the first page. As he did with all clients, he took down the basics: height weight, hair and eye color, frame, and made space for his notes.

"I'm sorry Mr. Worthington, I still don't understand what the blindfold is for," said Ms. Landry in a rather impatient and hateful tone.

"Ms. Landry, it usually helps my clients when they cannot see me because in your mind I am a stranger. That is also why there are no mirrors in this room. The point I make is it's easier for you to think that no one is here and you are comfortable talking to your conscience. Deep down you know you're not by yourself, but it's easier to write me off as some reassuring voice in your head."

"So, I'm like Pinocchio in this scenario and you're the invisible Jiminy Cricket?" Ms. Landry questioned, sounding more relaxed and comfortable.

"Bingo, Ms. Landry." Brian Caine now sunk down into his chair, the way a king would to his throne, pen and notebook in hand. The chair he sits in was set in a position so his reflection in the window could not be seen. The window in question was actually the only one in the room.

We have a special treat for y'all as our next writer has delivered an outstanding story for us to publish. Since it is a little bit too long we broke it down in two parts, and next week we will be printing Part 2. Torriano is a young and very talented writer as he's starting his internship with us this week we get to see how brilliant his mind works. Coming all the way from Berkeley High School in Berkeley, CA, Torriano delivers a masterpiece, as he keeps us on the edge of our seat with his story full of suspense! We hope after this little story, we can even print more of his work!

"Now Ms. Landry," Brian began slowly, almost whispering, "Tell me why you are here."

"I don't know what's wrong with me." Ms. Landry sounded as if she was immediately going to burst out in tears.

"What is wrong with you, Ms Landry?" he went on in his strange semi-hypnotic tone that he seemed to use on every client.

"I'm in love," she said, then paused, almost choking on the words she was about to say. "With my husband," she finished, struggling to breathe just a little.

"Calm down Ms. Landry," he continued in the same tone, which in other cases would seem strange and creepy. "Why is this a problem?"

"Because the man who lives with me now isn't my husband."

"Are you cheating on your husband Ms. Landry?" Brian Caine made it a habit to write down everything the client says to look back to as reference for when they came back. That's why he has a different notebook for each different client.

"No, I would never speak of such a thing," her head suddenly dropping down and staying there for a long time. "He lives with me."

"Is this a bad thing Ms. Landry?"

"I don't really even know anymore. Things were great. We had a loving relationship for a few months after we got married. Then his brother and father were killed, and he started drinking heavily as well as smoking. He would come home and he took out all of life's cruelties on me."

Brian Caine stayed silent not trying to interrupt the emotional floodgate he had just unleashed from his client. He kept jotting down notes like a madman trying to keep up.

"It's funny because one minute he could've been Satan himself, and the next he was Jesus Christ in the flesh!" She said through what Brian thought were tears.

"If you were to see me in the streets you would think 'oh, she's a pretty woman'. People just don't see the ugliness underneath, the bruises...the scars."

Brian was actually amazed that she didn't bury her face in her hands and begin to sob uncontrollably.

"Ms. Landry, what I advise you to do now is get help, not medical help, police help. Or better yet get away." Brian Caine spoke in his professional no-nonsense voice now, a voice he had come to love and hate, at the same time sometimes. He now rose from the chair and walked over to the woman named Stella Landry.

"I know it's hard to accept this, even with someone you hold dear, but you have to be strong and get out of your situation. My best suggestion? Leave. Get out of town, out of the state if possible. One day, when he's gone, pack up everything you own and leave without letting him know what you're doing and where you're going."

"But," she began, her voice trembling slightly, "He'll be mad at me."

"So what? If he does, take him to court, take photos of the bruises and scars, and when you go to court wear a dress that shows them off."

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Brian walked over to the woman sitting in the chair where countless others before her have sat and removed the blindfold. He then dug into his left pocket and removed a business card with his personal number on it.

"When you solve your problem, call this number back," he said, holding the card in front of her.

She took the card and exited from the room, closing the door behind her. Brian Caine now closed the green notebook titled 'Stella Landry' and tossed it into his briefcase.

The door came open again and what stood in the doorway was Stella Landry. She was indeed a pretty woman: five foot three with sandy blonde hair and deep blue eyes that looked like precious jewels. She smiled and said than you, then again exited the room. She liked him. He could tell. He wouldn't let it happen though. He couldn't, especially after what he did last time. How could he forget it? It has haunted him ever since.

2: The Dream

Brian Caine came home after dining at a local restaurant and attending to business in Oakland. He himself lived in a small house in San Francisco, alone. He wasn't that much interested in a wife, though he has had girlfriends, the relationships never lasted for even two months. He considered himself lucky enough to get as many women as he got.

He wasn't a bad looking man though: he was five foot size (which wasn't a bad height, if you wanted to get in line for most of the roller coasters at Six Flags). His dark blonde hair and icy blue eyes were probably the main reasons that women liked him. He wasn't built that badly either. He was chubby, but he wasn't fat. He had muscle, but he didn't have a six pack. He barely had a four pack, but hey, you work with what you have, and he worked it.

He walked through his nightly routine as usual. He went to bed in his tiny bed, alone, in his small room, in his tiny two bedroom one bathroom house. The only light in the room was cast by the neon of the bar sign next door. With the money that he made, he could live in a much better house of course, but what would be the point? All that space for just one man? Completely unnecessary right?

The annoying blink of the bar sign's 'c' from the 'Uncle Sam's' Sign made it almost impossible to sleep. He tossed and turned from side to side, the flickering neon light becoming more and more annoying with each passing second. What was increasingly annoying was that he couldn't sleep through it. He usually could, but tonight felt different. Perhaps he was still thinking about her; perhaps she was still on his mind.

After finally falling asleep, he woke up, wishing he didn't. He had a dream. It was the same dream that had haunted him for many years. In the dream, he was in the same strange yet familiar house and as it had then, it was storming outside. He smelled the sweet perfume that was so familiar yet so alien to his nose, teasing and leading a sweetly scented trail to the bedroom. He slowly followed his nose and as he did his lips curled into a smile. When he came to the bedroom, however, he stood frozen with terror, his eyes now as big as those of cartoon characters. His tongue stiffened up, his mouth moved as though he was speaking but no words came out.

What he saw was a figure on the bed, legs sprawled out in front of it, its body turned to the windows to its right. The figure was a woman in a red satin nightgown, and this particular woman was possibly the object of lust for every man. As the storm raged on with lightning brightening the dark sky, and raindrops splashing against the windows,

she turned to look at him. The woman who looked like Stella Landry now morphed to reveal its grisly true form. What he now fazed upon was a ghost from times past that continually haunts him and brings both terror and sadness to his soul.

The woman's name was Katharyn Jacobs. Her dark brown hair ran all the way down to the small of her back. Her light brown eyes that looked like drops of caramel looked sincere but mysterious, as if they were hiding the secrets of the universe. Her lips curled into a smile that said, "I've been waiting for you, watching the rain got boring." Her figure was the one thing that teased him the most. She wasn't supermodel skinny, but she wasn't chubby either. Her long, slender legs only complimented it even more. I guess what can be proven from this is that she worked out and he didn't.

The perfume still kept his nose on edge, inducing fantasies in his mind, the likes of which you wouldn't believe. So, in the end, he did the only thing he could. He was trapped, he could only advance himself towards her.

Brian rested on the edge of the bed while she slowly crawled over the covers to greet him. He had his back to her, hoping he could block everything out of his head, but to no avail. How could he disregard the soft, gentle touch of the warm hands as they caressed his shoulders and massaged his back? The hands removed his shirt and Brian felt the painted French-tipped nails tickle his chest.

"Where have you been?" Katharyn whispered slowly and softly into his ear. The scent of the perfume was a lot stronger now, driving him insane.

"I'm a little scared of the storm outside. I need someone to hold me and make me feel better."

He turned to her and his lips connected with hers. They were soft and luscious, and the taste was one he would never forget: that of strawberries. The very second their lips touched, red hot passion had swollen inside both of them.

They were interrupted by the opening of the bedroom door. The man that stood in the doorway was six foot one and very skinny, not sickly or toothpick kind of skinny but skinny indeed. The man wore a black raincoat, and the hood covered most of his face. He was a policeman and he went by the name James Elwood. James was holding a gun in his right hand, the grip on it loose as if it was about to drop.

All of a sudden, his hands clenched into fists, as if he could break the gun like a plastic toy. Katharyn had burst into tears and all Brian could do was stare like he had no idea what was happening. James raised the gun, which made Katharyn cry hysterically as if the apocalypse was near.

All Brian could think of was no way this can be happening.

(no)

The Hammer was cocked back.

(No, no)

The trigger was pulled.

(NO NO NO NO NO I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!)

The gun blasted and the sound seemed to have silenced the storm.

(no...I...Katharyn...)

"I love you."

Then darkness.

He awoke from the dream in cold sweat gasping for breath. Then he felt the hot wet tears rolling down his cheeks, the ultimate sigh of defeat.

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3: The Man

He sat in his office at work. Last night's dream already far from his mind. His pen tapped against his desk, which usually annoyed him, but on days as slow as today, he was liable to do anything. As soon as he was about to lose all hope and go home for the rest of the day, his phone rang.

"Hello."

"Mr. Caine, nobody is stopping by and all of your scheduled appointments are busy, so you can take the day off."

"Ok, thanks Lisa."

"But, you have an appointment tomorrow."

"On a holiday? I thought I had that day off."

"Not anymore."

"Alright, what's the person's name?"

"It appears that the man's name is..."

"Lisa, you're drifting off."

"Oh, sorry Mr. Caine. Here it is...his name is...um...James Ellwood."

Brian dropped the plastic phone that at the moment seemed to weigh a ton. He struggled to catch his breath, his heart started racing, his eyes bulges in their sockets, and the rooms started closing in on him.

"He's found me..."

He was snapped out of his trance when he realized Lisa was still on the phone.

"Uh, he-hello Lisa, are you still there?" he said, scrambling for the phone.

"Yeah, look Mr. Caine, are you ok?"

"Lisa, I'm fine."

"Alright, look, honestly, I worry about you sometimes."

"You don't have to worry about me Lisa, I'm ok, but what about you? When was the last time you went out?"

"For your information, Mr. Caine, I have a date tonight."

"Ok, well, I guess I better head home."

"Take care of yourself, Mr. Caine."

"Go home, Lisa."

The phone clicked and he heard the dial tone. He hung up the phone and then reached into the drawer in his desk where exactly five new notebooks rested. He took the red one on top and the black Sharpie and labeled it "James Ellwood". The cruel letters on the notebook cover seemed to stare at him, watch him.

I guess it's true that skeletons get too big for their closets, no matter how tightly they're locked up.(skeletons don't like living in closets Bri, as his father would say)

Either way, the skeletons of the past he tried to bury had risen from the grave.

When Brian came home he went straight to bed. He couldn't sleep. He was turned to the window, watching the blinking neon light.

(blink. James Ellwood, James Ellwood. blink. blink. James Ellwood)

Stop it.

(Brian Caine, Katharyn Jacobs, James Ellwood, oh my. blink.)

Stop it.

(blink, blink. Eat at, blink, Uncle Sam's, blink.)

Quiet.

(Reservations, blink, for 3, blink, Brian, Katharyn, and James Ellwood.)

Shut up.

(Brian, James Ellwood, I think you may be, James Ellwood, going crazy, James Ellwood, James Elwood. Have you been, James Ellwood, drinking at, James Ellwood,

Uncle Sam's, James Ellwood, again?)

Leave me alone! Get out of my head!

(IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, JAMES ELLWOOD, BRIAN CAINE, YOU'RE THE REASON, JAMES ELWOOD, THAT SHE'S DEAD! JAMES ELLWOOD, JAMES ELWOOD, JAMES ELLWOOD!)

Shut the hell up! His head was now pounding.

(He's going to, James Ellwood, kill you Brian, James Ellwood. HE'S GOING TO, JAMES ELLWOOD, RIP OUT YOUR HEART, JAMES ELLWOOD, JUST LIKE YOU DID TO, JAMES ELLWOOD, HIM! JAMES ELLWOOD!)

"Shut up!" he suddenly screamed. "What do you want with me! Leave me alone!"

The voices in his head stopped all at once. His heart was beating at the same pace as the blinking bar sign.

What's happening to me? He whispered to himself.

(You are, blink, psycho. Get some, blink, therapy Mr., blink, Therapist.)

He didn't bother with the voice this time. He only did his best to try and sleep. The night lasted forever.

4: The Encounter

Brian Caine had gotten less than two hours of sleep the night before. He was running on coffee, Coca-Cola, and a McDonalds double cheeseburger.

It was at this exact moment that he walked in. It was James Ellwood in the flesh. He was still very tall, only now instead of a black raincoat he wore a leather jacket. Although he had grown out his hair to shoulder length now, he was still the exact same man. While Brian himself was wearing dark sunglasses and a hat, he had a feeling James still recognized him.

"Hello, Mr. Ellwood, my name is Barry Reynolds."

"Hey there Barry," James replied with a smile.

"So, go ahead and sit down and tell me your story."

Brian sat in his chair while James walked to his and sat down. Brian already had the red notebook in his lap turned to his first page.

"Well, Mr. Reynolds, I should tell you that I just got out of prison on good behavior."

Yeah right, Brian Caine said to himself, still jotting down everything James was saying.

"The reason I went to prison was because on the day of that terrible storm - you do remember that storm now, don't you Mr. Reynolds?" James said in a teasing sort of voice.

"Yes, I do, but please continue, Mr. Ellwood."

"Ok then. You see, on that night I went on a murderous rampage that landed me in prison in the first place. I confessed to everything of course."

"Wow, such an honest man."

"I explained that I had a reason," James said, his tone becoming much darker. "I told them that before that, I found my wife having sex with another man. This broke my heart, ripped my soul to shreds. I didn't know what to do."

Brian was surprised, but not that surprised, at how calm James's voice was when he talked. He was inhumanely calm, like the whole thing didn't bother him, almost as if it never even happened.

"There was a gun in my hand that night, and I just went berserk. I shot her in bed, right in the head. I tried to shoot the man, but he was too quick. He was gone and out the window by the time I reloaded."

The eerie tranquility in his voice was now really starting to scare Brian as memories of the past now flashed before his eyes and made his flesh crawl.

"I went outside into the storm and shot everyone in my

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way or that was walking towards me. I hurt a lot of people that night: Four officers and twenty civilians including my wife, twenty-four people in total. A hell of a slaughter for a man simply walking. I used every single bullet in my arsenal. I was surprised that I even had time to reload. When they found me I was unarmed. I was sitting on a bench in the park, the gun by my feet, when they apprehended me."

"Wow Mr. Ellwood. That is some story." Brian was trying to sound as casual as possible, but the truth was he was incredibly disturbed.

"But I'm not even finished yet. You see, my story is still going on, it's still being written. The truth is, Mr. Caine –"

"Whoa wait!" Brian interrupted without even really thinking, "What did you just call me?"

"Brian Caine, that is your name isn't it? Or I'm sorry, that's right, 'Barry Reynolds'" he said this with a chuckle. "You really didn't think I forgot about you, did you?" No, but I have to hand it to you Brian."

James now rose from his chair and walked to Brian, who also rose from his chair and they both stood face to face. James had no expression but Brian's facial expression spelled out one thing: hatred.

"You're a hard man to track down, Mr. Caine."

"If I made it easy, then I would have more women than Hugh Heffner," Brian replied in a cool, collected voice.

"I am going to get you, Brian Caine. I'm going to make you crazy, make you ruin your life. I'm going to make you just like me. Then, when I'm done, you better believe that I

will kill you."

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but death threats only pay me."

"I'll bet they do, but you should remember Brian, I was a cop. I have the tools, the skills, the smarts, the technology. And, of course, the drive and perseverance. So watch out: I could be right next to you and you wouldn't even know it."

"Good day, James."

"Likewise, Brian."

"Get the hell out of my office."

"Gladly."

James Ellwood opened the office door and strode outside then stopped in the middle of the hallway and turned around.

"Like I said before, the truth is Mr. Caine, we have unfinished business, stories without endings, though they will be written soon. Be sure of that, all things must come to an end Brian Caine."

He then turned and Brian Caine closed the door. He was indeed angry and tossed the red notebook into his briefcase so he could leave. Now see, even though there are many things Brian Caine can do to James Ellwood, he can't rule out that yes, he is a cop. He was at least, but one doesn't forget the important things he is taught. They stick with him his whole life. They became a part of him. That one fact alone makes James Ellwood a very powerful man. Also, Brian cannot deny the one undeniable truth: he is very afraid of him and what he can do.

ROBERTO LOPEZ

Our next writer is something special, because he's not even located in the USA. Roberto, in fact, is banned from the U.S. because he was deported for living that life of crime a lot of you readers are trapped in. He took his opportunity here in the U.S. for granted and now must face the consequences of his actions and decisions. He's writing to y'all from Mexico, because he cares that much to share his story and the lessons that he learned from it. So we're more than honored to present to you Mr. Roberto Lopez as he gives us an excerpt of his life.

Mexican with an English accent.

To most Mexicans if you come back home they want to see you with a truck and a lot of dollars in your pocket. If you don't have that, you don't have nothing coming because to them, you're just a worm in their society.

So my message to the youngsters out there who think they're American when they were really born in a different country, be careful and stay legit 'cause life is great out there in the States. Take advantage of your opportunity and do it the right way or you're going to find yourself here in Mexico with nothing. No family, no money, no holidays, no thanksgiving, no Santa Claus, no Halloween, no labor day with barbeques, no Nikes, no McDonalds. Yeah, it seems like nothing now, but when reality strikes, that when you say, "Damn!!" There were so many warnings, and I didn't get it.

Don't take this message lightly, my fellow young brothers in the game. It's a few days from Christmas as I write this, and guess who I'm spending Christmas with?? I'm spending it with a female called "Loneliness," the one who is always there with me on special days ever since I left my heart in San Francisco. Brothers in the game, watch your step and be legit 'cause that's the only way they can't deport us all.

I Left My Heart In San Francisco

I was born in Ocotlan, Jalisco, Mexico, and the oldest of three boys. When I was still very young, my father left for the United States to chase after the American Dream and make a better life for my family, and by the time I was 5, he sent for us, and brought us to San Francisco. I remember that it was hard at first, to adapt to a new culture with a different language, but once I got the hang of things, the rest of the ride was smooth. I did most of my schooling there, you know, elementary, middle, high school and a bit of college. I had all my teenage experiences out there. I had my kids there, and my parents and my brothers are still out there.

But I also did my street thing, did things I'm not proud of, things that got me in trouble with the law.

At first it was fun, but by playing with fire, I got burned, and because I wasn't born in the States, I got in trouble with immigration. They deported me at the age of 24. I lived out there for nearly 20 years and my heart stayed out there. That's why I say I left my heart in San Francisco.

My whole life was out there and I had the opportunity my parents had worked so hard for. But by doing the wrong thing, I ended up back in my own country with an American state of mind and it's hard for me to be accepted here. This is where the irony kicks in. I'm too American for Mexico, and I'm too Mexican for the United States. That's where the famous phrase in Spanish comes to play – ni de aqui ni de alla (Not From here Neither from over there). Now it's lonely holidays spent missing my family, having thoughts of crossing the border to go back to where I consider home, facing rejection in the pueblos of Mexico because I'm a

Alone

You want to live your life alone
 Darkness and seclusions are your only companions
 You shun society
 And balk at all efforts made by family
 To draw you from your cocoon
 Take out boxes
 Decorate your card table, dining platform
 Like gargoyles spitting rain from rooftops
 You cycle through trash-strewn television
 And the refuse being broadcasted
 Secrets are guarded because your soul is the only one privy
 To your thoughts and actions
 Coming out of your hovel well
 After dark you slink through the waste of
 Sperm and eggs that you make
 Your acquaintance of
 You think in your head that you are not one of them
 The creatures that are society's boon
 You have become what you so despise
 What you now need has replaced what you used to want
 Making way, you backtrack the route
 Traveled every night
 To your pitiful existence in your
 Drafty confines
 Your greasy locks hang over
 Your sunken cheeks
 You wipe up the trickle of blood
 And welcome the warmly
 You live to die.

Our next writer is the ever intriguing Slyde, as he delivers a few sensational pieces of writing. Slyde does a great job telling us what he has learned throughout his life as it reflects in his writing. He talks about the system, but how he was the one that messed up, not the system. We all know the system is shady. But we make our own decisions and sometimes we are our own worst enemy because we bring our own downfall. Slyde also comes through with a couple brilliant poems that are well written and descriptive. Sending us his writing from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, Slyde this week pounds the pages of our publication with some heavy thinking writings!

Another Day, Another Dollar Ten

This is what the judge had in mind when he sentenced me to state prison. Things and conditions never improve. It is all part of the correctional process. Corrections... The Dept. Of.

The state spends more money on corrections than education, go figure. I stay in a box, a gas station bathroom, with bunks. Program, what program? Twenty-three hours in the cell, my bad, twenty-three and a half hours. No TV, no radio, No yard, no library, just all part of the Correctional

Process. Like that old Paul Newman Movie goes... "Have you got your mind right, son?"

I have definitely learned to mind someone. Have I got my mind right? Maybe. They tell me when to eat. They tell me when to play. They tell me to do something and I do it. I'm tired of answering to "they." "They" will become your higher power. Higher powers, that might be one of my issues that I cannot really address. I have to believe in myself first before I can believe in something else. That is all I'm going to touch on religion or higher powers.

Politics and religion are subjects to avoid. Unless, you want to get into a conversation that will escalate to an argument. Who knows what that can lead to? As I push through the day, and the hours creep by at a Molasses like pace. Instead of getting angry, all I can say is

"Another day, another dollar ten." That buck ten is "gate money," that I'll receive upon my Release. That dollar ten stops at six months. Two-hundred Dollars is the maximum Gate Fund Allowance. I haven't gotten a raise the whole time I've been doing this dating back to '01. I think that the judge had all of this in mind when I was sentenced.

I'm never comfortable in here. Not when I sleep next to a drafty window in December. Not when I'm laying on my lumpy mattress reading a book. Not when I'm working out in these cramped quarters. Never. There is never any physical comfort. Sleep is interrupted by disgruntled correctional officers or a cellmate using the restroom. Disgruntled jailers, Co's, Deputies, k-9's, what have you, is one of my major annoyances.

They all draw a really decent wage, but they all have this chip on their shoulder. I'm not one to shy away from making my opinion known. They can all go back to school and get a job they like. They can but right now for all I care. It's not my fault that they chose their career path as a wonkey. Well... as this day comes to an end... another day, another dollar ten.

More

What is it you want? I don't care...More. What kind is it you like? It doesn't even matter... More...

Yeah... been there and done that. More of whatever. More of anything, you can have. More money than Bill Gates. You can have more women than Hugh Heffner. You can have more drugs than South America. You can have more cars than Broadway Auto Row.

You can have all of that, "and then what?" I don't care... More" Ask yourself, "and then What?" After anything you plan to do. Therein lie the answers to the things we do to end up in these institutions. "And then what?" "I don't know...More." Does that sound like anything you go through? It does for me.

"And then what?" Hospitals, institutions, and Jail. Ya might think that it can't or won't happen to you. I used to think like that. " The judge and the DA washed me." No. You washed yourself. "And then what?" You have to answer to the law, that is what.

You can live your life in jails, hospitals, and institutions wondering how you put yourself in places where you have no say in what goes on. I can't stand to be in the places I've been. They just keep on getting worse also. The food is on an ever-sliding decline in quality and portion. Freedoms we once had in these prisons keep diminishing. It just gets worse "And then what?"

When inside these jails, hospitals and institutions we adhere to these strictly enforced programs that either the K9 or other groups force upon us. We show discipline and are accountable at all times. Why do we fail at creating a "program" on the streets?

I know that I'm coming from a "do as I say, not as I do" stance. If anyone needs this wisdom I try to share, it is me. I ask myself "And then what?" I don't know... More.

Despair

You ask once
 If they know
 They might oblige
 The game is old
 You were not the first
 New thoughts are recycled
 ideas
 Ignorance makes you naive
 You feel so far
 Nothing works like it used to
 Moving on will not help
 Confusion sets you up
 A one tracked mind
 Only one agenda
 And then what
 You need

You don't want
 Tired and sick
 The street offers no solace
 The facade that you try to
 hide behind
 It's a transparency
 Dirty hands run through
 empty pockets
 Friends are just
 acquaintances
 The give and the take
 Never even out
 Helpless and shaking
 You beg for release
 Broken and thoroughly
 weathered
 A parasite feeding on
 nothing.

Shattered Dreams

I stood on the yard today, away from everyone, finding a place to be with myself and think. I stared out over this prison yard on my 32nd birthday and thought for probably the thousandth time, "How did I get here?" "How, oh how did I get to this place with my life?" I watched the dry grass dying by the second. No coming back for that grass. Dry grass and the dry souls on the same acre of land.

Time of self-reflection can be very therapeutic but also very sad. It feels good to process where my life is at and become focused and centered. It also becomes sad when so many regrets and disappointments run through the vast wilderness of my mind.

I look back at my dreams as a kid. What did I want to be when I grew up? I would think about my future like an artist stares at a blank canvas. Full of potential and promise, just waiting for that first stroke, I remembered when I wanted to be a ball player, a fire fighter, even a politician, lawyer, and explorer of the ocean. These were all my dreams. I wanted to be a Daddy, a good husband and take care of my Mom when she became old. It's amazing how attainable these dreams seemed. It was as if it wasn't a matter of if I would do these things, but when.

As I watch all the men on the yard today, I wonder what their dreams could have been as boys. This dry, dirty, lonely place is full of football heroes, astronauts, and doctors. But what happened? Where did the dreams go wrong? How did some kids fulfill their dreams and others not? What is the difference between those who became doctors and those who only dreamed of becoming doctors?

In my own life I find that although I may have had all the aptitude or ability to achieve my dreams. I lacked the commitment needed. I believe the major difference between those who dream and those who do is the ability to stay the course, to play it out and finish what you start. This is the

Adam Azevedo writes from Solano State Prison in Solano, CA, and shares with Beat readers his reflections as he walked the prison yard on his 32nd birthday. Adam is the founder of "Behind the Walls Ministries" and spends his time encouraging fellow inmates to work toward a better future. We hope you are heartened by what he has to say as Adam himself says his dreams are now like broken shattered glass. Just as people view art in different ways, you can view your broken glass as a disappointment or as a potential masterpiece. It is up to you what you do with it.

link I missed.

My dreams to me now seem like a piece of glass that has fallen and shattered. I could sit here and try and put the glass together piece-by-piece but it will never look the same. So, do I fruitlessly attempt to live through my old dreams or do I create new ones, new ones that are possible and, with a little commitment and hard work, will some day become a reality?

I realize that I can continue to dwell on my mistakes and failures and what I couldn't do, or I can create a future of new possibilities. I can choose to look at my life as what I failed to do or what can one day be achieved. The reason I chose to write about this is that my hope for Behind The Walls Ministries is that it would be a voice that expresses real life situations, feelings and hopes. Never overlook the difficulties because it is only in walking through the dark valleys that we can ever enjoy the view from the mountaintop.

Whoever may be reading this may look back and see their life as being not where they had hoped. Well, the future is still yet to be. So live your dream. Just as people view art in different ways, you can view your broken glass as a disappointment or as a potential masterpiece. It is up to you what you do with it.

I suggest you take some time and figure out what is important to you and make a commitment to making a beautiful future for yourself.

With God's help, anything is possible.

KEITH SMITH

To The Struggling On The Inside And The Outside

A lot of you might remember me from some of my articles from prison. I have good news and bad news. Since most people want to hear the bad news first, I'll start there. I'm writing from Los Angeles. Upon my release I was hoping to transfer my parole, but here I am, waiting on some paperwork so I can transfer back to the Bay Area.

And now for the good news: I am out of prison, on parole, in a program in hopes that I do the right thing with my life. Today I know my past doesn't have to be my future. I look forward to going back to East Palo Alto because that's where I was born. I'm waiting for the opportunity to give back to my community, to help create positive activities in the Bay Area. I know today that when we are free we must trust someone. Even our P. O. has the ability to help us get started if we want a fresh start. Talk to your parents, and let them know you need advice on bettering yourself.

I see people on the streets today and I must admit I have to thank God for all his blessings. I know that being

Long time Beat Writer Keith Smith writes in from Los Angeles as a free man. He was released from state prison in December of 2008, and is currently participating in a rehabilitation program. He's still is eager to share his wisdom with our readers, in hopes he can keep some of them from making some of the mistakes he made. We appreciate his heart, and encourage him in his efforts to live free and put his past behind him. Thanks for your faithfulness, Keith!

cool today can get us caught up. And when we get caught up, where are the so-called friends? Life is too short to be spent in the system. I gave the system over half my life. I started out in juvenile hall, then CYA, then prison. It was because I didn't open up and talk to anyone. Real friends listen and help you by just being there. Even a parent can be a friend. Try it and see.

We must change the way we've been living. If you are in the hall, or in an after-school workshop, if you are coming out of prison, then give life a chance! God will see you through and get you beyond your shortcomings. Starting over means staying positive and not letting the past become your future. With that said, have a blessed day, because God is good!

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read the rest of Adam Azevedo's BWO piece on page 71

